

Algeria's PM says security improving; government forces kill 70 rebels

PARIS (R) — Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said on Sunday that the security situation in his violence-stricken country was improving and urged citizens to be vigilant to help ward off more massacres of civilians.

Hours before Mr. Ouyahia's statement on his cabinet's policy before the Council of the Nation (upper house of parliament), Algerian newspapers said government troops had killed 70 Islamist rebels and at the weekend were besieging about 100 others.

"The security situation is improving steadily throughout the country," Mr. Ouyahia told the house in a speech carried live on state-run television.

Without specifically refer-

ring to the latest killings of civilians — two massacres last Friday in which a total of 58 people died — he said the government was committed to pursuing the struggle against Islamist rebels including through arming civilians living in villages in isolated areas.

"I call on citizens to keep vigilant in order to safeguard the life of innocent people against terrorists who have only one purpose: cutting throats and killing people at random," he said.

In the massacres just three days ago, among the 58 victims were more than 30 children. They were slaughtered and their bodies mutilated in two attacks, one in the southwestern region of Saida and

the southern area of Djelfa.

Government security forces blamed the killings on "terrorists" — government short-hand for Islamist rebels.

Meanwhile, troops shot dead 21 rebels and wounded seven in Ammi Moussa area in the western province of Relizane on Saturday. La Tribune newspaper said on Sunday.

Seventeen more guerrillas died the same day after an hour-long gunbattle on a road linking Relizane to neighbouring Tissemsilt region, it said.

Forty-four other rebels were killed in military operations carried out on Thursday and Saturday in Algiers and the neighbouring Khemis El Khechna area, said Al Acil

and Liberte.

Al Acil said troops clashed for four days with rebels in Khemis El Khechna where they killed eight of the guerrillas.

Liberte newspaper said 18 other rebels died in a continuing military offensive on rebel strongholds in Relizane where about 100 gunmen were still trapped under persistent helicopter gunship pounding.

The newspaper said helicopters were hitting the besieged guerrillas to clear the way for soldiers to storm their hideouts.

Relizane province was the site of some of the worst massacres of villagers during the Holy Month of Ramadan which ended late in January.



ISRAELI SOLDIERS PREVENT OLIVE TREE PLANTING: An Israeli officer Sunday approaches Palestinian protesters who are planting olive trees on land confiscated by the Israeli army near the Egypt-Gaza border, in Rafah City. Some 150 Palestinian protesters demonstrating against confiscations of their lands scuffled with Israeli soldiers who fired tear gas to disperse them (AFP photo)

Iranian FM meets Hizbollah political official in Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi met with Hizbollah political chief Hassan Khalil on the "situation in southern Lebanon," Iranian diplomatic officials said Sunday.

The meeting between Mr. Kharazi and the official of Hizbollah took place late Saturday night, the officials said.

They quoted Mr. Khalil as telling Mr. Kharazi that the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah had "forced the [Israeli] enemy to renounce many of its conditions and to try to conclude security arrangements" with the government of Lebanon.

Mr. Khalil said that "no party is capable of giving security guarantees or of dis-

arming" Hizbollah, which spearheads efforts to force Israel from its self-declared security zone in south Lebanon.

Israel said earlier this month it is ready to apply a 20-year-old U.N. resolution stipulating its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, but conditioned pulling back on Beirut providing security guarantees.

Beirut and Damascus, the main power broker in Lebanon, have refused the Israeli proposal.

Mr. Kharazi met with Syrian President Hafez Assad here Saturday and dismissed the Israeli offer to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

Speaking earlier Saturday

following a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fawuk Sharaa, Mr. Kharazi said that Iran and Syria both consider the offer by Israel to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon a "trick."

"We agree about south Lebanon," he said. "The question of an Israeli retreat from southern Lebanon is nothing but a trick trying to distract attention from [the Israeli] failure in the region."

Mr. Kharazi arrived Sunday for a two-day visit to Syria. He is due to meet Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam later Sunday, before leaving Damascus Monday morning for Lebanon.

Turkey condemns attack in Greece

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey sharply condemned the attack on a car belonging to a Turkish military attaché in Athens on Sunday and called for better protection of its representatives in Greece. The Anatolia news agency reported.

The foreign ministry expressed the hope that the perpetrators would be swiftly caught and brought to justice. Anatolia said.

The ministry called on the Greek authorities to provide for the security of its representatives and personnel in Greece and ensure that such attacks could not happen again.

The car belonging to Ahmet Haluk Arabacioglu, assistant military attaché at the Turkish embassy, was set on fire overnight.

A Greek anarchist group claimed responsibility for the attack. No one was reported injured, but the car was seriously damaged.

DFLP calls on world to protect Palestinians from Israel

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), one of the three main factions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), called on the international community Sunday to protect the Palestinians from Israel.

"Given the worrying silence of Washington regarding the aggressive Israeli policy and the intensification of [Jewish]

settlement, we call for international protection for the Palestinian people," DFLP spokesman Ali Baduan said in a statement here.

Mr. Baduan denounced the Israeli army for firing Saturday with rubber-coated bullets on demonstrators outside the West Bank town of Nablus, wounding six Palestinians, including Taysir Khaled, a member of the PLO's

Executive Committee. The spokesman also called on the Palestinian National Authority to "immediately cease any negotiation with the Israeli government."

The DFLP, founded in 1969, is a Marxist group opposed to the Oslo peace accords. The group's founder and secretary general, Nayef Hawatmeh, directs its activities from Damascus.

14 killed, 30 injured in dispute over chain saw in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — Tribal clashes over ownership of a chain saw have killed 14 people and wounded 30 in northern Yemen, tribal sources said Sunday.

The victims died in a series of incidents since last month between members of Al Imaisi and Al Firassi tribes, both from the northern Dhahran province. The saw reportedly belongs

to the Al Imaisi, who use it to cut stones for building homes for themselves and others.

Al Firassi tribesmen are partners with the Al Imaisi in building homes and claim that agreement gives them partnership rights to the saw. The Al Imaisi disagree.

The tribes have attacked each other's homes and property and have killed livestock, the sources said.

Fighting among rival clans, mostly over land claims, is common in Yemen, an impoverished country of about 17 million people in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Weapons — including heavy machine guns and rocket launchers — are not difficult to buy in Yemen. The weapons are smuggled in, mostly on boats, and sold on the flourishing black market.

Copts face no problems in Egypt — presidential advisor

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian presidential advisor Ossama Al Baz denied in statements published on Sunday that Coptic Christians were a minority in Egypt, treated as second-class citizens or denied their rights.

"Copts face no problems in Egypt... Copts have their rights and their duties just like Muslims do," Mr. Baz told the Arabic-language daily Al Hayat, which is based in London and published simultaneously in several Arab capitals.

"Copts in Egypt are not a minority. They are Egyptian, and there are no differences between Egyptian Muslims and Egyptian Copts," said Mr. Baz, who is Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's most

senior advisor.

Mr. Baz charged that "no official or public U.S. group has the right to interfere" in the Coptic question, accusing those defending Coptic issues of "being paid by foreign parties to achieve personal ambitions." He did not elaborate.

A U.S.-based Coptic group last week took out a full-page advertisement in the Washington Post to complain about human rights abuses in Muslim-majority Egypt.

Copts represent about 5.8 per cent of the country's population of 62 million, according to unofficial estimates, but the International Coptic Federation (ICF) said the Copts number 10 million people.

"Christians of Egypt, descendants of the pharaohs, have no place in modern Egypt [and]... have been denied the very basics of recognised human rights," the ICF said in an open letter to Mr. Mubarak.

The letter complained of restrictions on church activities, discrimination in political, academic and military affairs, rape and forced conversion of Coptic girls and requirements that Copts pay protection money.

The letter was published on the eve of a U.S. congressional debate on the "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act" that would permit sanctions on governments responsible for religious persecution.

Turkey's top general to visit Russia, discuss weapons sales to Cyprus

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's top general is to travel to Russia in April in a bid to dissuade Moscow from weapons sales to the Republic of Cyprus, a Turkish newspaper reported Sunday.

Chief of General Staff

Ismail Hakki Karadayi is due to meet with his Russian counterpart and other military officials during his visit, scheduled to begin after a week-long Muslim holiday in mid-April, the daily Yeni Yuzyil said.

Mr. Karadayi is expected to discuss the controversial Russian sale of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles and T-80 tanks to the Greek Cypriot government with Russian officials and to ask for an end to military assistance to the Greek side. Yeni

Yuzyil said. According to the paper, the trip signals something of a breakthrough, as Mr. Karadayi's request for a meeting had previously been turned down by the Russians no less than twelve times.

NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 13 killed in Somalia fighting

MOGADISHU (AP) — Heavy clashes between rival factions in Somalia's coastal town of Hobyo has killed at least 13 gunmen, witnesses said Sunday. Militiamen from the Sa'ad and Suleiman subclans have been fighting since Saturday, the witnesses, speaking on condition of anonymity, said by field radio. Suleiman businessmen have accused Sa'ad fighters of launching the attack in Hobyo, about 650 km north-east of the capital, Mogadishu, to kill Suleiman seafood exporters.

Arafat to travel to Netherlands

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will go to the Netherlands Monday to discuss with leaders there the blocked Middle East peace process, officials in Gaza City said Sunday. Mr. Arafat is scheduled to meet Queen Beatrix and hold talks with Prime Minister Wim Kok and Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo during the one-day visit, according to the Palestinian leader's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeina. Mr. Arafat is also expected to receive a peace prize from a Dutch group, Mr. Abu Rudeina said.

8 killed in tribal fighting in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Eight people were killed and 12 others wounded in a clash between members of two nomadic tribes in southwestern Iran, a newspaper reported Sunday. The fighting erupted last week in the Sepidar region of Ahvaz, the main city in Khuzestan province, where the two sides opened "fire" on each other with machine-guns and pistols. Four people were killed on the spot and four others died later in hospital, Kayhan daily said. Sepidar is an area with overcrowded apartment blocks where nomads of Arab descent were settled during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq.

More than 150 kilos of drugs seized in Qatar

DOHA (AFP) — Qatari authorities have seized more than 150 kilograms of drugs and cracked a network of Asian traffickers, the interior ministry said Sunday. It did not give their nationality nor the number of arrests. The drugs, including 15 kilos of marijuana, were intended for sale in Qatar itself. Convicted drug traffickers face jail terms of between 10 and 20 years in Qatar, and a fine of up to \$82,000.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — The World of Peter the Rabbit and Friends
16:20 Cartoon — The New Fred and Barney Show
16:30 French Programmes
18:00 Riding High
18:30 Drama — Neighbours
19:00 The Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — De Cause Acifich
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hope and Gloria
20:00 Documentary — Perspective
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10 Drama — Marker
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama — Law and Order
23:10 Baywatch Nights
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:05 Fajr
05:23 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:40 Dhuhr
15:11 Asr
17:57 Maghreb
19:15 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweilheh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Cold weather conditions will con-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweilheh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweilheh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Adnan Ashhab 5602977
Dr. Ayman Al Muhaseb 875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah 847351
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636790
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852
Al Quds pharmacy 896702
ZARQA:
Dr. Hilal Al Sayyid 896702
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897367
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 4623101
Repairs 5661101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 4453300
Queen Alia Int. Airport 4453300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 56661317
Husseini Medical Centre Tel. 836813
S6856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 46428116
Akileh Maternity 46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771012
Al-Bashir 77511126
Army, Marka 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 56022050
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital 09983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (RJ) 09990999

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 021272775
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 021247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 031314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 44153200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44152700.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:45 Sanaa (RJ)
08:30 Jeddah (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:05 New Delhi (RJ)
09:25 Beirut (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam
13:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:30 London (RJ)
17:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:45 Kuwait (RJ)
18:30 Cairo (RJ)
18:40 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)
22:00 London (add) (RJ)

22:10 Moscow (add) (RJ)
01:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:50 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:15 Jeddah, Aqaba (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

04:15 London (BA)
09:15 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:25 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
18:00 Istanbul (SD)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

ARRIVALS

Royal Wings (RW)
06:05 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:50 Aqaba (RW)
11:10 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
12:00 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

10:20 London (add) (RJ)
10:45 Frankfurt, London (add) (RJ)
11:20 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:45 Kuwait (RJ)
12:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:10 Moscow (add) (RJ)
14:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:40 Sanaa (RJ)
23:00 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
23:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00 Istanbul (TK)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Al Arish (KF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
13:20 Istanbul (SD)
14:15 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 Khartoum (SD)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53 Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20 Aqaba (RW)
11:40 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Trade ministry developing draft insurance law

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply is currently working on a project to develop and modernise the insurance sector in Jordan and stimulate its role in the national economy, according to a ministry official Sunday.

Basel Hindawi, director of the ministry's insurance department, said the ministry is working in conjunction with private insurance companies to draw up a modern draft law enabling the concerned authorities to enhance their control and supervision over this sector and giving the private sector a chance to be able to cope with the requirements of the national and international economies.

Dr. Hindawi said the draft law, which was initially discussed at a seminar on March 9 by representatives of several firms, would help Jordanian insurance companies compete with firms at the regional level. He noted that a joint committee from the public and private sectors has been formed to conduct a detailed study of the draft law before drawing up the final draft, which will be submitted to the Council of Ministers.

Dr. Hindawi said the draft law is designed to raise the efficiency of the insurance sector, improve the competitiveness of Jordanian firms, strengthen the country's market, and train personnel.

According to the official, Jordan now has 27 insurance firms with a total registered capital of JD65 million and a market volume worth JD90 million, or 1.7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He noted that this represents a modest percentage compared to other developing countries, where he said insurance accounts for up to 10 per cent of the GDP.

The chairperson of the Federation of Jordanian Insurance Companies, Raouf Abu Jaber, described the insurance business as one of the main economic sectors in Jordan, playing a role similar to those of tourism and banking.

He said Jordanian insurance companies offer coverage for a wide range of risks, from goods to floods and other natural disasters.

According to Dr. Abu Jaber, the insurance industry, which at present employs 7,000 Jordanians, annually provides the state treasury with JD20 million in taxes and other fees. Total sector investments exceed JD100 million and earn investors around JD10 million per annum, he added.

Dr. Abu Jaber said the federation was working with the government to finalise the draft law, adding that the two sides are interested in providing incentives as part of the modernisation of the existing law, as well as enabling the insurance sector to meet the requirements of the World Trade Organisation.



ROAD CONSTRUCTION COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED: Minister of Public Works and Housing Nasser Lawzi signs an agreement Sunday with a Swedish road construction company, under which the Swedish company will grant the ministry \$500,000. The grant will be assigned for road construction and planning (Petra photo)

Changes to draft elections law inadequate — opposition

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Opposition and pro-government parties agree that there are only "minor changes" in the draft elections law recently unveiled by the government but are divided in their evaluation of it.

The draft legislation maintains most of the features of the previous 1993 law — most importantly, the one-person, one-vote system, long rejected by the opposition.

While the Islamist-led opposition reiterates that the electoral formula is aimed at limiting their representation in Parliament, pro-government forces respond that equality demands that all voters be granted the same number of votes.

The government's draft, which has not yet reached the Lower House's legal committee in charge of examining it but was published in the Arabic press Thursday, lowers the voting age from 19 to 18.

It maintains the current ethnic and religious quotas in the 80-member House — nine seats for Christians and three seats for Chechens and Circassians.

The draft law does not increase the number of deputies and maintains the ban on voting for members of the security and military forces, as well as the judiciary.

The government's draft also replaces the previous voting cards with magnetic identity

cards, a move the government says will help avoid irregularities and prevent voters from casting more than one ballot.

"But the real reason of people's discontent with the [elections] law, the one-person, one-vote system, remains," protested Ishaq Farhan, head of the Shura council of the powerful Islamic Action Front (IAF).

The IAF and its mother organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood, led a coalition of 11 opposition parties that boycotted the last elections in protest against the one-person, one-vote formula and what they termed "a steady erosion of parliamentary authority under successive governments."

"It is too early to say whether we will boycott the next elections, too," Dr. Farhan said. "We are waiting for the government's official announcement, and then we will take our stand."

Deputy Khalil Haddadin, who is also secretary-general of the Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, said the draft law does not present "any change whatsoever."

"The government is saying that it lowered the voting age, but even that is a bluff,"

According to Article 3 of the government's draft, all Jordanians who have reached the age of 18 by Jan. 1, 2001 are entitled to vote. "But, as the elections are held in November, by the time those 18-year-olds go to the polls, most of

them will be 19," Mr. Haddadin said.

Other observers said that, though they had already ruled out drastic alterations such as the abolition of the one-person, one-vote system, they still expected more changes, especially in regard to the allocation of seats.

There are no substantial changes, only new formalities," commented former minister Ibrahim Izzeddin, a liberal.

"But people were annoyed most by the administrative divisions," he said. The government's draft maintains the constituencies of the previous law, which divided the Kingdom into 13 demographically unequal areas.

The opposition has long protested as undemocratic the allocation of seats among different districts, noting that in some constituencies, candidates reach Parliament with a few hundred votes, while in others winners have to obtain thousands of ballots.

Deputies reached by the Jordan Times yesterday said the draft would very likely be discussed during an extraordinary session of Parliament this summer.

Though the first ordinary session of Jordan's 13th Parliament was closed Saturday by a Royal Decree, the MPs said His Majesty King Hussein will respond positively to a recent request for an extraordinary session signed by 41 deputies.

Agreement signed to operate mobile library

AMMAN (Petra) — The Haya Arts Centre and Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation signed an agreement Sunday to jointly operate a mobile library for the benefit of children in the remote regions of the country.

Under the agreement, signed by Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Director General Ibrahim Izzeddin and Haya Arts Centre Board Chairman Taher Masri, the foundation will provide JD2,000 to purchase furniture and other

equipment needed for the mobile library, plus JD3,000 worth of books, publications and other materials suitable for children at different age levels.

The foundation will also supply the mobile library with new books, provide a classification system and follow up on the library's improvements.

For its part, the Haya Arts Centre will provide the vehicle housing the mobile library, undertake the vehicle's maintenance and arrange the library's visits

in conjunction with the concerned authorities.

The mobile library service, the first of its kind in the Kingdom, is designed primarily to serve the children living in remote rural and badia regions, where schools generally lack libraries of any kind.

After the signing ceremony, Messrs. Izzeddin and Masri toured the Haya Arts Centre and inspected the services offered to children. The centre comprises a library, a theatre, a science museum and laboratories.

Land Day opportunity to renew struggle to regain occupied Arab lands — Srour

AMMAN (J.T.) — Lower House of Parliament Speaker Sa'd Havel Srour on Sunday said today's anniversary of Land Day constitutes a very important occasion to renew "our attachment to our occupied Arab lands and our determination to regain them."

Mr. Srour was speaking on the eve of Land Day, which marks the 22nd anniversary of the killing by Israeli forces of six Palestinians who were protesting Israel's seizure of their land in the territories occupied since 1948.

"This anniversary offers us the chance to renew our determination... and provide support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain and exercise their full rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian soil," said Mr. Srour.

In a statement to the press, Mr. Srour said: "The anniversary should reflect the Arab people's firm determination to regain their usurped lands and end Israel's hegemony and

expansion as well as settlement policies."

On March 30, 1976, Israeli Arabs staged their first-ever nationwide general strike to protest the expropriation of their lands by the state of Israel. Violent clashes took place between Arab citizens and Israeli security forces, resulting in the death of six Arabs and the injury of scores more.

Mr. Srour attacked Israel for pursuing an expansionist policy in total disregard to U.N. resolutions calling for Israeli

withdrawal from occupied Arab lands and a halt to its inhuman practices against the Palestinians.

"On this anniversary, we reassert our demand for a just, comprehensive and durable peace, which can only be established by the return of the occupied lands to their rightful owners and compliance by Israel with U.N. resolutions," said Mr. Srour.

Mr. Srour saluted all people who are sincerely pursuing efforts to help the Palestinians regain their rights.

Anani, Lower House committee review King's U.S. visit

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani on Sunday said the main purpose of His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the U.S. was to revive the Middle East peace process, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Dr. Anani told the Lower House of Parliament's Committee on Arab and International Affairs that Jordan was keen on continuing its support for the Palestinian National Authority, helping the Palestinians and Israelis reach an agreement on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory as agreed upon under the Oslo accord, and seeing a halt to the construction of Jewish settlements and the demolition of Arab homes.

Dr. Anani and the committee members reviewed several issues concerning Jordan's foreign policy and the outcome of the King's visit to the U.S.

He said the King met with U.S. President Bill Clinton, U.S. officials and members of Congress, and presented the idea of opening a direct dialogue with Iraq.

According to Dr. Anani, the idea was not rejected by the U.S. administration. Dr. Anani reviewed scheduled U.S. aid to Jordan in 1999, which he said will amount to \$228 million, and the European Union's assistance to the Kingdom, which this year will reach \$70 million.

Ensour commends role of Arab parties in Israel in promoting peace

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour on Sunday voiced Jordan's appreciation of the role Arab political parties in Israel are playing to promote peace and build bridges between Arab Israelis and the Arab World at large.

Dr. Ensour was speaking at a meeting with a visiting delegation headed by Abdul Wahab Darawsh representing the Arab Democratic Party in Israel.

The minister said Jordan is keen on supporting the Palestinian people in their ongoing negotiations with the Israeli government to regain their legitimate rights and establish an independent state on their

national soil.

He emphasised Jordan's demand that peace talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis be resumed, saying that additional efforts should be exerted by various parties to end the current deadlock.

Dr. Ensour reviewed a number of issues with Mr. Darawsh and his accompanying delegation, including the general situation in the occupied Arab territories, the role of the Arab parties represented in the Israeli parliament, and these parties' influence on Israeli political decisions.

Also discussed was the question of cultural and educational services that Jordan pro-

vides to Arab Israeli students at the Kingdom's state universities.

At the meeting, which was attended by Deputy Hamadeh Far'aneh, Mr. Darawsh briefed Dr. Ensour on his party's activities and its contributions to the peace process.

Mr. Darawsh expressed appreciation of the role played by His Majesty King Hussein in support of the Palestinians in their drive to achieve their legitimate goals.

Earlier, Mr. Darawsh met with the secretary general of the Ministry of Higher Education, Ahmad Hisban, to discuss the assignment of seats in Jordanian universities for Arab Israeli students.

Ensour asks journalists to enhance Jordan's image abroad

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour has urged journalists to refrain from publishing articles that could adversely affect Jordan's relations with other countries.

Speaking at a meeting with journalists and Jordanian correspondents working for local, Arab and foreign media, Dr. Ensour said the national interest must be regarded as the common denominator and should be given priority over all other considerations.

By exercising freedom responsibly, he said, the Jordanian media can help enhance rather than ruin Jordan's ties with Arab, Islamic and foreign states.

Stating that Jordan is keen on advancing the march of democracy, Dr. Ensour said the government hopes that the media would reflect a bright image of the Kingdom and refrain from "assassinating the Jordanian

social image by presenting society as rife with drugs and crimes, as some weekly tabloids used to do in the past."

By publishing false material, he added, some weeklies had "the past greatly harmed the national economy and the agricultural sector by causing some Arab states to refuse to import Jordanian agricultural products."

"The weeklies' publication of immoral subjects offensive to Jordanian society was far worse than criticising or attacking the government for its political, social or economic policies, or even the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, according to Dr. Ensour."

Referring to the Press and Publications Law, the minister stressed that the government is not contemplating the introduction of a new draft law, adding that Parliament alone has the authority to reject or accept the government's amendments to

the 1993 law.

He said the government has accepted and duly implemented the High Court's decision, which ruled that the amendments were "unconstitutional" and "opened the door for the weeklies to resume publication."

Dr. Ensour denied that "the government will interfere in the question of union membership by professionals."

Bilal Tal, director of the Press and Publications Department (PPD), told the assembled journalists that his department confiscates non-Jordanian newspapers and magazines only if they contain material considered harmful to Jordan's national interests.

He said a Jordanian journalist has the right to serve as a correspondent to three foreign papers provided he or she receives approval from the mother organisation and not from the organisations' Amman offices.

JT reporter awarded for her coverage on crimes of honour

(Continued from page 1)

He said that crimes of honour are a "flagrant contradiction to our ongoing calls to preserve human dignity and all human rights."

Earlier this summer, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan called on law enforcement officials to apply the law against domestic abusers.

Ms. Hussein said that authorities are reluctant to cooperate or divulge information about crimes of honour "because of their sensitivity," but said she feels that this attitude is changing.

"I have also noticed that the coroners and pathologists are talking more and more about this in their lectures," she said.

Officials estimate that the number of honour crimes actually committed each year may be at least twice as high as the number reported. Ms. Hussein said that if the law changes, there is a possibility that "hon-

our crimes" — which are often reported by the families of the victims themselves — may go "underground" or be reported as accidental deaths.

"But I have noticed also that the coroners and pathologists are starting to investigate reported 'accidental deaths' or 'suicide' of women to see if they may actually have been crimes of honour," she said.

Ms. Hussein said that prior to her work as a reporter, she was familiar with the term "honour crime," but it was only when she started reporting on crime that the brutality of such crimes played on her conscience.

"There was a story of a 16-year-old girl that really moved me," she said. The girl was raped by her brother, and became pregnant. Her other brother tried unsuccessfully to kill her, and after that she was forced to have an abortion. Her family then married her off to a man nearly 50 years her senior

who divorced the girl six months later.

"On May 31, 1994, her other brother killed her and her family blamed her for seducing the brother who raped her," she recounts. "She was a victim six times. She was only 16. When we published that story, a well-known, U.S.-educated woman called the paper to complain that this was not an accurate image of our country. It really pushed me to pursue this issue."

"I do hope that one day, we will reach the point where I won't have to write or report on these crimes anymore," she says.

The Reebok award also entails a cash prize to further the work of each recipient. Ms. Hussein said she is considering establishing a research centre that could be part of a larger network dealing with human and women's rights concerns.

The Reebok Human Rights Award is presented annually to

four human rights activists around the world. Other recipients were Anthony Jones (United States) for advocacy against unlawful police intimidations, harassment and brutality; Abraham Gebreyesus (Eritrea), an activist demanding international attention to the human cost of anti-personnel land mines; and Didier Kamundu (Democratic Republic of Congo) for fact-finding investigations into ethnic and political violence in the Congo under President Laurent Kabila.

This is the second award that Ms. Hussein has received for her work. An exposé entitled "Murder in the Name of Honour," published in 1994 earned her first prize in the 1995 MEDNEWS Award. The report was an analysis of honour killings, with highlights from three major cases of these crimes that occurred in 1993 and 1994.

Erekat: We want U.S. to support Albright commitments to Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

"We want the U.S. to find a mechanism to implement what has been agreed upon and the future U.S. proposals must be based on these," he added.

He denied that Mr. Ross' talks have reached a "deadlock" and said that talks are still going on with the U.S. official.

"There is nothing wrong with the peace process," said Dr. Erekat, "the wrong thing is Mr. Netanyahu's one-sided practices and his refusal to implement what has been agreed upon."

He stressed that the Palestinian side wants a U.S. "guarantee" that Mr. Netanyahu will respect the agreements with the Palestinians "before reaching an agreement over the U.S. proposals."

The Palestinian envoy, who holds the portfolio of minister of local administration in the Palestinian cabinet, said that Mr. Arafat was discussing with several Arab leaders holding an Arab summit to discuss the impasse in the peace talks.

Dr. Anani, who is also foreign minister, said that the Palestinian envoy has briefed him and Dr. Tarawneh on the latest developments in talks with Mr. Ross and that the visit comes as part of the coordination process between the two sides. Dr. Anani, who met with President Arafat in Ramallah on Friday, said that he discussed with Dr. Erekat "certain ideas" which Mr. Ross has submitted but declined to elaborate.

what's going on

FILM
* "Orlando" at the British Council, Jabel Amman on Tuesday, March 31 at 6:00 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
Monday
* Palestinian play "Al Mutashamel" at Osama Mashini Theatre, Abdali at 6:00 p.m.
* Algerian play "Habil and Habil" and French play "100 Mobiles à Part 1" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

Tuesday
* Algerian play "Habil and Habil" and Egyptian play "The Daughters of Bernadette Alba" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

LECTURES
* "The Islamic Movement and Political Action in Jordan Over

Half a Century" (in Arabic) by Dr. Ishaq Farhan at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabel Amman at 6:00 p.m.

* "Europe, the United States, and Peace in the Middle East" by Dr. Volker Perthes at the Institute of Diplomacy at 3:00 p.m.
* "Germany, the Near East and the Middle East" by Dr. Volker Perthes at the Centre for Strategic Studies, the University of Jordan on Tuesday, March 31 at 12 noon.

EXHIBITIONS
* Works by Mohammad Al Shammani at Rawaq Al Balqa, Fuhais until April 7.
* Exhibition of electrical equipment, home appliances, clothing, perfume, sweets (marking the advent of 'Eid Al Adha) at the University of Jordan, until April 7.
* Book exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabel Amman, First Circle, until April 2.

Italian frigate to arrive in Aqaba today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The antisubmarine warfare (ASW) frigate "Maestrale" of the Italian navy is scheduled to arrive today at the port of Aqaba on a visit that falls within the framework of a naval group redeployment in the Mediterranean and is related to activities linked to the "Partnership for Peace" and "Partnership for Mediterranean," an Italian embassy press release said Sunday.

The ship, amongst the most modern units of the Italian navy, is commanded by Captain Pierpaolo Cangetti and is part of a naval group commanded by two-star Admiral Giancarlo Cicchetti, the commander of the Italian First Naval Division, the state-

ment said.

The Italian crews have been tasked with strengthening relations and cooperation with the people of the countries visited and developing joint training with navies of the region, it added.

The ship left Palermo on Feb. 23, visited the ports of Pireus, Poti, Odessa, and Varna, and after leaving Aqaba will arrive at Valencia and Lisbon before going back to Italy on May 16, according to the announcement.

The commander will host a reception on board for both Jordanian civilian and military authorities on March 31, said the statement.

Indian coalition faces fresh turmoil despite confidence vote win

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The survival of India's fledgling Hindu nationalist-led government in a weekend confidence vote only underlined the coalition's fundamental weaknesses, analysts said Sunday.

Following four months of political crisis while elections were held, analysts warned of fresh turmoil in coming months.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, they said, faced a Herculean task to hold his multi-party alliance together.

Mr. Vajpayee, leader of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party) which heads a 17-party coalition, won a parliamentary vote by 274 to 261 after an acrimonious two-day confidence motion.

The result, however, was only guaranteed at the last minute when a 12-seat regional party opposed to the nationalists, the TDP, agreed to side with the government.

India has had five governments within two years. The previous two coalitions lasted 11 and seven months respectively.

Mr. Vajpayee, meanwhile, told reporters Sunday: "We will welcome the TDP joining the government and talks are already on in this regard."

Pran Chopra, a leading Indian political analyst, said: "Yes, for the time being the crisis has blown over."

"But the BJP government does not have the numbers as it is dependent on the outside support of a regional party which has 12 seats. Its survival depends on that."

Mr. Chopra, from the independent Centre for Policy Research, added: "The TDP has said it will support the BJP issue-by-issue."

For many Sunday newspapers, however, the mood was relief.

The Economic Times' headline summed up reactions with a banner headline saying: "On thin ice, but a government at last."

The last government collapsed four months ago forcing elections which threw up the most fragmented parliament for the past 50 years, with more

than 40 parties, many of them small regional outfits, sharing out the 545 seats.

The BJP, with 179, and the once-dominant Congress, with 141, were the only major groupings.

Mahesh Rangarajan, another top political commentator, warned the BJP, accused by Congress of planning to replace the country's secular constitution with a Hindu theocracy, faced major problems.

"First the BJP does not have a majority and secondly they have more than a dozen allies to be kept happy," he said.

"It is going to be a gamble. A lot will depend on the BJP's spirit of accommodation and how the actual division of power works out."

Mr. Rangarajan added it was the first instance a regional party had been able to "hold a government to ransom."

The BJP, whose previous spell in government two years ago lasted just 13 days, has already dropped its most radical policies from the coalition agenda to keep its allies happy.

That included plans to draft uniform laws on marriage, divorce and inheritance which are opposed by the country's Muslims, and to build a temple on the rubble of a mosque destroyed by Hindu fanatics in northern India in 1992, which led to 2,000 deaths in religious riots.

Opposition parties, however, claim the nationalists would revive them when they felt secure in power.

Congress spokesman Ved Prakash said the confidence vote win was "the beginning of a crisis", arguing the nationalists had an "artificial majority."

"The BJP will collapse because of the contradictions within the alliance. There are one-man parties, independents and regional parties... demanding ministers in the cabinet."

"The coalition will not be able to govern as it will not be able to meet the demands of all these parties."

But Mr. Vajpayee said his government would be stable and was "committed to give a clean and efficient administration."



New Miss Transsexual Thanaporn Vongprasert (right) is congratulated by her runner-up Yada Thawitsang at a contest in Pattaya. Hundreds of fans burst into wild cheers and applause when the judges named Thanaporn as Miss Tiffany 1998, the first transvestite beauty queen (Reuters photo)

Thailand crowns transsexual beauty queen

PATTAYA, Thailand (AFP) — After a six year hiatus, Thailand Sunday crowned a new transsexual beauty queen amid all the glitz and glamour of the real thing.

At the end of a contest extending into the early hours Sunday, 22-year-old Bangkok resident Thanaporn Vongprasert was awarded the crown and 50,000 baht (\$1,300), which she tearfully pledged to spend on enhancing her beauty.

"Aren't the girls so beautiful," enthused chief judge Seri Wongmonta, to reporters as the contestants shuffled off the stage and the curtain finally came down. "This competition started in 1992, but was stopped after complaints that it wasn't good for Thailand's image. Now we have restarted in the spirit of the government's 'Amazing Thailand' campaign," Judge Seri said.

"This has really given everyone here a break from the economic problems. And the government are supporting it," he added, pointing out a fellow judge whom he identified as a Tourism Authority of Thailand division head.

Timed to coincide with the Miss Thailand pageant being held in Bangkok 120 kilometres north of this seaside resort, some 1,500 people came to watch a heady mix of beauty pageant and cabaret style glitz.

Transsexuals and transvestites, known as "kru-toys," are a common sight throughout Thailand's 73 provinces and are found in all levels of society, although most locals still regard them with some fascination.

Amid a smattering of cabaret classics and local songs sung by Thai pop stars, MCs presented the candidates by reading out their measurements — breasts, waist and hips.

"Thirty-six, 27, 37. Look at her hair, perhaps it was inspired by our beautiful Thai temples," a purple-jacketed MC crooned over one candidate with a beehive hair-style and hooped ball gown.

"Oh, and look at that dress, it's like those cages we put over chickens in the marketplace."

Backstage earlier in the evening, contestants put the final touches on their outfits and faces, fussing in front of mirrors while slipping lightly in and out of flimsy dresses. "How do my breasts look? ... Hey, watch out with those shoulder pads. I look like an alien," one contestant said, admonishing her assistant.

The women, to a man, have all submitted to the skilful art of the plastic surgeon. "There are about 50 girls from all around the country, and people have come from all over to support them," judge Seri said later, adding that the show was sponsored by local businessmen doing their bit during the economic crisis.

Thailand, going through its worst economic downturn in decades, launched an "Amazing Thailand" drive to promote the country last year, hoping to lure more visitors and investment.

But looking around the crowd one could spot perhaps 10 to 20 foreigners. The rest were mainly Thai families, local businessmen, their wives and small children, and they seemed to be having a ball.

Reject it, and create a dangerous public policy vacuum which could only lead to social conflict, and even dare I say, violence."

Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Minister Philip Ruddock said the policy was right in principle and in line with most other countries.

"People don't go to other countries and walk into social service benefits that are paid for by taxpayers, particularly when they've been the subject of assurances of support and guarantees by families who want them in Australia."

Australia's image overseas has taken a battering recently with the rise here of independent MP Pauline Hanson and Mr. Howard's failure to cut her down. Ms. Hanson says Australia is "in danger of being swamped by Asians" and wants immigration halted.

Labour opposition leader Kim Beazley said the government "should have begun an anti-racism campaign two years ago and promised he would put one in place if he won the next election, which could be called this year."

"This government has had its anti-racism campaign sitting in abeyance for over two years now, as Pauline Hanson has crisscrossed this country, pedalling her rubbish," he said.

"Labour will resource an anti-racism campaign, and we will also actually implement one."

have people prepared overwhelmingly to support multi-culturalism and a non-discriminatory migration policy but on the other, you have people worried about how migrants will assimilate."

The findings come as Prime Minister John Howard's conservative coalition government fends off claims it is dismantling Australia's multi-cultural structures and talks up its "racially non-discriminatory immigration policy."

The policy favours English-speakers and denies new migrants social security benefits for two years.

Last year the government slashed its immigration intake for 1997-98 to the lowest levels for nearly 20 years, citing high unemployment.

Ethnic leaders said Sunday the policy could lead to social unrest and even violence.

"We are convinced that this policy risks the creation of a second class of citizens," Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales chairman Stephan Kerkyasharian told the conference.

"Not only does it undermine the future of Australian multi-culturalism, but the stability of our society itself."

He warned against a government proposal to abandon the word "multi-cultural," which is under review as a suitable description for a policy for managing cultural diversity.

"On the one side, you

Taleban leader orders soldiers not to kill Afghan prisoners

KABUL (AFP) — The Taliban militia's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has ordered his troops not to kill opposition soldiers taken prisoner during fighting in Afghanistan, the state-run Radio Shariat said Sunday.

"Nobody is allowed to kill a prisoner of war," unless the captured opposition fighter threatens his life, the radio quoted Mr. Omar as saying.

The Taliban leader, headquartered in southern Kandahar city, warned those resorting to executions of prisoners or war-wounded would be tried and punished by the Islamic courts.

Mr. Omar's decree came in the wake of speculation that both sides were bracing for a spring round of fighting, now that Afghanistan's prolonged winter is ending.

According to figures released by humanitarian organisations operating in the war-torn country there are as many as 7000 prisoners of war being held by the warring sides.

The Taliban, who control two-thirds of Afghanistan, criticise their rival alliance of ill-treating religious militia prisoners in northern provinces held by the opposition.

The opposition coalition comprises former Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood, ex-Communist General Abdul Rashid Dostam and a minority Muslim Shiite faction Hezbi-Wahdat.

Gen. Dostam, in September last year, said his forces had unearthed some mass graves in the northern province of Sheberghan. Gen. Dostam claimed the mass graves contained around 2,000 Taliban prisoners executed by his rival ethnic Uzbek general Abdul Malik in May.

Phnom Penh battle for control of Khmer Rouge stronghold

ANLONG VENG, Cambodia (AFP) — Cambodian government troops have seized part of the rebel Khmer Rouge's last stronghold but were coming under heavy attack Sunday from the guerrillas.

Phnom Penh troops and their allies Saturday took the tiny hamlet of Anlong Veng near the centre of the last refuge of the rebels who ruled Cambodia during the "Killing Fields" years.

Troops held the village, at the foot of a range of mountains, but their grip appeared shaky with the hardline Khmer Rouge in control of most of the high ground.

The historic rebel-held temple of Preah Vihear on the Thai-Cambodian border about 65 kilometres east of Anlong Veng fell under government control early Sunday when guerrillas there defected, a senior military officer said.

Deputy Chief of Staff Meas Sophea, speaking to reporters at Sre Noy, south of Anlong Veng, said the guerrilla division there had "shaken hands" with government troops.

Thai military officials who monitor the border said only that there appeared to have been unusual activity in the Preah Vihear area.

The sources said they "understood" but had no confirmation that the temple was now controlled by Phnom Penh and that a formal ceremony was planned for Sunday evening. Meas Sophea said he planned to visit the area later Sunday.

The village of Anlong Veng — for years the heart of the Khmer Rouge's mysterious organisation — was Saturday all but deserted after most of the 10,000 civilians in the area fled to safety near the Thai border. Chickens, pigs and other

livestock ran freely among the village of shacks, terrified by the sounds of fighting as government troops and their new allies took control.

The government brought reporters to the area by truck in the first such access to Anlong Veng from the Cambodian side since 1994. The journalists were holed up in a shack in the village as they came under barrages of anti-aircraft gun fire from the Khmer Rouge above them.

The spot is about 1.5 kilometres from the homes of the two guerrilla leaders Khieu Samphan and Ta Mok, who left the area two days before defectors launched a mutiny last Wednesday.

Rebel defectors met reporters and led them into the village, saying they were disillusioned with military commander Ta Mok's authoritarian style since he ousted Pol Pot last year.

They said Ta Mok and his lieutenants were in the mountains surrounding the village. They reportedly had only between 250 and 400 men and many more defectors were expected to cross to the government side.

"Ta Mok is the man who is responsible for the fall of our ideology," said defector Pich Cheang, who was the Khmer Rouge ambassador to China from 1975 to 1984.

"Since he arrested Pol Pot and tried Pol Pot (last June and July) he has been in charge of everything. A real dictator. He doesn't listen to anyone. He didn't give anybody a chance to do their work."

"I expect all of our comrades and friends to come to join us because no one has any faith in Ta Mok anymore," he told AFP.

"Ta Mok killed the revolution that Democratic Kampuchea had built," he said.

Democratic Kampuchea was the name given to Cambodia during the 1970s Killing Fields years under the Khmer Rouge, in which up to two million Cambodians are believed to have died.

Access to the centre of the Khmer Rouge operation here — deserted by the leadership last week — was impossible amid sporadic but heavy clashes in the area.

At least one Phnom Penh soldier was injured in one attack which took place in the several hours that reporters were in the zone, while Khmer Rouge commanders sent three men down from the hills in a failed attempt to ambush the visiting party.

Anlong Veng is a remote jungle stronghold of the Khmer Rouge, made up of scores of villages in tough and inhospitable countryside. It was not immediately clear how much of the sprawling Anlong Veng area the government controlled, but analysts stressed that control of a handful of villages did not amount to a complete victory.

Clandestine Khmer Rouge radio, still in the hands of Ta Mok and his supporters, said between 4,000 and 5,000 people had fled Anlong Veng amid the fighting but that the guerrillas had not lost control.

A top Khmer Rouge commander told Worldwide Television News (WTN) the leadership of the guerrilla force had regained full control over the entire area and that pro-Phnom Penh forces had been pushed back about six kilometres.

"The Khmer Rouge control everything 100 per cent," the officer told WTN reporters on the border.

Chemicals predict whether cancer treatment will work

WASHINGTON (R) — Radioactive chemicals can be used to predict whether a cancer therapy will work well in patients, scientists said Sunday.

Michael Welch, a chemist at Washington University in St. Louis, attached radioactive but harmless chemicals to cancer drugs, then used Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans to track their progress through the body.

"Our data suggests that we can now tell an oncologist whether anti-estrogen therapy will work for a particular person before that person begins treatment," Mr. Welch said in a statement.

Mr. Welch and his team tagged estradiol, a natural version of the hormone estrogen, with radioactive fluorine. They injected this tagged drug into 10 breast cancer patients.

The patients then got tamoxifen, a hormone-based cancer therapy that works against estrogen.

Using pet scans, they looked to see how well the patients' bodies took up the estradiol. With one exception, patients whose pet scans showed their bodies absorbed estradiol well also saw their tumours shrink when they got tamoxifen.

Speaking to the American Chemical Society meeting in Dallas, Mr. Welch said his method might be a good one for choosing who are the best candidates for tamoxifen therapy.

A similar technique might be used to show which patients might respond well to radiation therapy, Mr. Welch said.

Radiation is less effective against tumours that have a poor oxygen supply.

Mr. Welch used radioactive copper tracers to tag substances taken up by tumours. In laboratory animals, the copper was trapped in oxygen-starved tissue but washed out of healthy tissue — which might offer a way to scan for tumours that will be most easily killed by X-rays.

once a month, sometimes with his family. The rest of the time the house is used as a constituency office.

The Sunday Times said it obtained access to full details of the security screen around the house, including the location of video cameras and motion sensors and the type of locks fitted on doors.

It quoted a retired police officer as saying the information would have been priceless to any terrorist.

U.K. probes security leak over Tony Blair's home

LONDON (R) — The British government ordered an urgent security probe Sunday after a newspaper reported that plans to protect Prime Minister Tony Blair's house were freely available to the public.

The Sunday Times said it obtained a full copy of the security plans for the house owned by Mr. Blair in his north of England constituency by paying £11.75 (\$19.75) to the local council.

Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Jack Straw said he was very concerned by the apparent security lapse. "He has ordered an immediate inquiry and asked for the material to be withdrawn," a spokesman said.

The newspaper said hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent after the election to protect the house in Sedgefield, County Durham, which Mr. Blair has owned since 1983.

Mr. Blair goes there about

Chinese find oldest Chinese writing carved into bones

BEIJING (R) — Chinese archaeologists have dug up 3,500-year-old sheep bones bearing the oldest known examples of Chinese writing, the official Xinhua news agency reported Sunday.

Eight inscriptions were carved crudely and deeply into two bones found in a pit at a sacrificial site in China's eastern Shandong province, Xinhua said.

Experts recognised only two of the primitive characters — one meaning "six" and the other "divination."

Chinese bone inscriptions, along with Egyptian hieroglyphics, are among the most ancient writing forms in the world. But unlike hieroglyphics, the inscriptions survive to this day in a more refined and complex form.

The earliest bone inscriptions previously found — in central Henan province — dated back 3,200 years to the late Shang Dynasty, Xinhua said.

More than 360 relics were found in the Shandong pit, including pottery and stone, bone, horn and shell pieces.

Chemist believes

World News

Jordan Times, Monday, March 30, 1998

Clinton arrives in Botswana on 5th leg of African tour

GABORONE (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton arrived in Botswana Sunday at the start of a three-day visit to the country as part of a major African tour.

The presidential plane, Air Force One, touched down at Gaborone airport bringing Mr. Clinton and his entourage from South Africa, where he spent four days and addressed key economic and development issues.

He was due to begin his stay in Botswana by meeting President Ketumile Masire and his deputy, Festus Mogae, who is scheduled to take over as head of state from the veteran Southern African leader in two days time.

The U.S. leader is then expected to address a reception in honour of the outgoing Masire, before taking a small plane to Kasane in the Chobe national park, where he is due to stay until Tuesday.

Botswana is the fifth nation for Mr. Clinton on the tour, which has taken him to Ghana, Uganda and Rwanda as well as South Africa, where he saw many of the symbols of the freedom struggle against apartheid.

Following a demanding schedule in South Africa, Mr. Clinton's visit to its northern neighbour will be mostly private and he is expected to concentrate on environmental issues.

"The purpose of the visit is to acknowledge appropriately the second peaceful transition of the longest continuous democracy in Africa," said Joe Wilson, senior director for Africa at the National Security Council, ahead of the trip.

After his series of talks, the U.S. leader and his wife Hillary will check into the luxury Mowana Safari Lodge in Kasane, in Botswana's northeastern Chobe game reserve on the border with Zimbabwe.

Mr. Wilson said Mr. Clinton wanted to visit Chobe "for a day to see the game and to visit a village in northern Botswana where there will be what is called a 'khodla', a local government town hall meeting."

"When he returns from Chobe, he will be conducting an environmental roundtable with some of the leading environmentalists from the continent," Mr. Wilson told reporters.

That event is due to take place at the game reserve just north of the capital Gaborone Tuesday.

Mr. Clinton is due to wind up his African tour in French-speaking Senegal.



An elderly man reads his ballot paper as he queues for voting at a polling station in the village of Goren, outside Kiev (Reuters photo)

Russian Communists will oppose Kiriyenko's nomination

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's lower parliament, the Duma, was heading for a showdown with President Boris Yeltsin Sunday after the Communists who dominate the assembly said they would oppose his choice of Sergei Kiriyenko as prime minister.

"We cannot approve just anyone for the second most important position in the state," said Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, as he rejected the young reformer's credentials to become premier.

Mr. Yeltsin has threatened to dissolve the Duma if it does not accept Mr. Kiriyenko, installed as acting premier Monday after Mr. Yeltsin sacked the previous government.

Mr. Zyuganov responded defiantly Sunday, saying:

"He is not going to make the Duma toe the line by threatening a possible dissolution."

The Russian constitution obliges the president to submit his choice of premier to the Duma for approval. If it rejects his candidate three times the president has the power to dissolve the assembly.

Mr. Zyuganov said it would be extremely irresponsible to appoint the relatively inexperienced 35-year-old, who would have to decide on using Russia's nuclear capability in a crisis if Mr. Yeltsin fell ill.

Mr. Yeltsin handed the so-called nuclear suitcase over to former Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin when he went into hospital for heart surgery. In November 1996, deputies are expected to discuss the candidature when it is submitted Friday, after which they have a week to debate the issue.

The Communists and their allies have 226 seats out of 450 but could struggle to obtain the absolute majority needed to block the candidature.

Nationalists who are also strongly represented in the Duma have yet to decide their position.

Mr. Yeltsin is reported to be impatient with the slow pace of Russia's economic reforms, and ready to take on his opponents in parliament despite a recent bout of illness.

Mr. Kiriyenko, an oilman and former energy minister, is seen by Mr. Yeltsin as a dynamic candidate for the job.

Cuba rejects U.S. offers of humanitarian aid

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuba said it would reject a U.S. offer of humanitarian aid as long as Washington leaves its 36-year-old economic embargo against the Communist-ruled nation intact.

The rejection comes one week after Washington announced measures that would ease economic pressure on the regime of President Fidel Castro. While Mr. Castro called those measures "positive", an offer of humanitarian aid to the island was turned down.

"If (Washington) wants to make a humanitarian gesture, the only really humanitarian thing would be to lift the embargo," said Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina in a statement published by the Communist Party daily Granma Saturday.

Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega Alamino agreed, calling the offer of humanitarian aid "offensive" in remarks published in the Italian magazine "Familia Cristiana."

The embargo-easing measures Washington announced last week would permit direct charter flights from the United

States to Cuba, ease the issuing of permits to sell medical supplies, and allow Cuban-Americans and Cubans living in the United States to send up to \$300 every three months in humanitarian remittances.

In addition, there are plans for deliveries of humanitarian aid: Tuesday U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Rome and described several humanitarian measures that Washington was carrying out to help the Cubans that included channelling aid through Caritas, the Roman Catholic church's charity agency.

"It is unacceptable to receive (U.S.) humanitarian aid while the embargo remains in place," Mr. Robaina stated following a meeting in the Vatican with Pope John Paul II Friday. To do so, he said, would be "humiliating for our people."

Cardinal Ortega said in his magazine interview that humanitarian aid is "only a palliative and in a way it is almost an offensive handout."

"They use powerful measures to strangle the economy and suck the resources of our country, and then lend a helping hand," he said.

"We accept the aid because we cannot survive without it, but the feeling is very strong that this is not respectful of the dignity of the people," he said.

"The carrot and the stick are not serious instruments to negotiate on an equal basis," Gramma added in a commentary on the U.S. measures.

The main point of contention in the aid programme is food. U.S. President Bill Clinton asked Mrs. Albright to work with the Republican-controlled Congress to "fashion an approach" to send Cuba food aid. However Mr. Clinton does not support a proposal that would end the food and medical elements of the embargo.

A 1992 U.S. law tightening the embargo on Cuba prohibited foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from selling their products — including food — to Cuba.

At the time the law was passed, 90 per cent of the 700 million dollars Cuba imported in food came from subsidiaries of U.S. companies. The 1992 restrictions were later reinforced by further restrictions in the 1996 Helms-Burton law.

Ukrainians vote in parliamentary elections, leftwing gains expected

KIEV (AFP) — Ukrainians went to the polls in parliamentary and municipal elections Sunday, with the Communists expected to make gains amid widespread disillusionment with the ex-Soviet republic's sluggish reforms.

In a televised address on the eve of the elections, President Leonid Kuchma urged voters to go to the polls, saying a new parliament was needed to pull Ukraine out of its economic doldrums.

"We need a parliament that is qualitatively new (...) so that 1998 and the years after become a period of growth," Mr. Kuchma said.

The 32,462 polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (0400 GMT) and were due to close at 10:00 p.m. Four ballot papers were printed for each of the 37.2 million eligible voters — two for parliamentary candidates and two for would-be local councillors.

Half the 450 parliamentary deputies will be elected on a proportional basis from party lists and the other half in simple majority contests.

"What's all this paper? It's like an accountant's office here," exclaimed one woman pensioner as election officials explained the

voting procedure to her. In one central Kiev polling station only nine people had turned up to vote nearly two hours after it opened. Most of them were pensioners.

Four policemen sat next to the ballot boxes decorated with the blue and gold Ukrainian national emblem, and five election officials were on hand.

Throughout the country voting procedures were being monitored by some 17,000 independent Ukrainian observers, 200 from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, seven from the Council of Europe and representatives of the 30 parties in the running.

The election campaign was marred by assaults and intimidation of candidates and by the suspension of two opposition newspapers — Vsesukrainskiye Vedomosti and Pravda Ukrainsky.

An opinion poll conducted in mid-March showed the Communists well in the lead with 14 per cent of voting intentions followed by the Greens (six per cent), the Rukh nationalist party with 5.8 per cent and the Socialists with 3.5 per cent.

The leftwing parties were expected to garner between

30 and 40 per cent of the parliamentary seats, compared with 28 per cent in the outgoing parliament.

After casting his ballot, Stepan Datskoy, 76, said he voted for one Socialist candidate and one well-known Kiev banker in the parliamentary election.

The banker, Mykhaylo Brodsky, was "unfairly arrested, and I voted for him because I want justice to reign," Mr. Datskoy told AFP.

Mr. Brodsky was arrested just two weeks before the elections after running foul of the authorities, who accused him of tax evasion in property deals. He also owns a major stake in the opposition newspaper Kievskiy Vedomosti.

Olga Gromashevskaya, 48, said she had voted "for democrats of course, not for the Communists."

"I'm a doctor and unfortunately I know all the problems we have in the health service. Some of the candidates are doctors. I know some of them personally, so of course I voted for them," she said.

Meanwhile, two elderly women about to vote carefully studied the photos and resumes of 24 constituency candidates on posters stuck up near the ballot boxes.

In his televised address, Mr. Kuchma made it clear he was hoping for a good turnout among the younger generation to counteract widespread support for the leftwing parties among elderly people facing economic hardship and nostalgic for the Soviet period.

A low turnout was expected to favour the left, whose voters are generally considered more disciplined about voting.

Ukrainian society is polarised between a minority of nouveaux riches, many of whom have criminal connections, and a vast majority of people struggling to make ends meet.

Seventy-three per cent of the country's 50.6 million inhabitants are ethnic Ukrainians, 22 per cent Russians and the rest minorities including Jews, Romanians and Tatars.

The left has gained support due to the fragmentation of the centrist and rightwing parties and the financial scandals that have sullied the government's reputation.

Ukraine's gross domestic product slumped by nearly five per cent in 1997, important privatisations are stalled, wage and pension arrears have climbed to \$2.6 billion.

Gunmen kill three in troubled Karachi

KARACHI (AFP) — Gunmen shot dead three people including two Christians overnight in a continued wave of violence here that has left 25 dead within a week, police said Sunday.

Two armed men entered a house in troubled Karachi's eastern Shah Faisal Colony and sprayed bullets at two Christians, killing both of them, they said.

A second person was

gunned down in the city's central Liaquatabad area, they said, in a possibly politically motivated act, after the Friday death of a man killed by a sniper's bullet.

The Christians, Bashira Masih, 60, and Juma Masih, 50, were maintenance workers in their tense neighbourhood, a police official said.

Police have rounded up scores of rival political activists in intensified raids

following a wave of violence that was sparked last Monday and Tuesday in which 21 people were killed.

The city's Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), representing the Urdu-speaking settler community, and its rival MQM-Haqiqi faction have blamed each other for the killings.

The MQM said that 13 of its activists and supporters were among those killed,

while the rival Haqiqi faction claimed that 10 of its members were among the dead.

An independent counting of the toll in last week's violence was not possible.

Paramilitary troops and police have been deployed in sensitive areas of Karachi which has a history of political, ethnic and religious violence that has claimed more than 3,000 lives in recent years.

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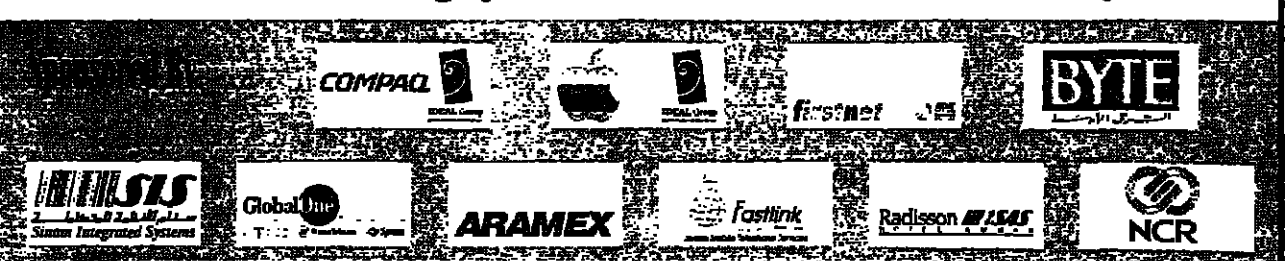
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Chemist believes ritalin could be better

WASHINGTON (R) — The popular drug ritalin, used to treat children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), may not be as safe or as effective as it could be, a scientist said Sunday.

It might work better and have fewer side-effects if makers purified it down into a simpler form, said Yu-Shin Ding, a chemist at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York.

Ms. Ding said the drug, like many others, has a "left" and "right" version — and only one version, known as an isomer, may be really effective.

Speaking at a meeting of the American Chemical Society in Dallas, Ms. Ding said the drug ritalin is a mixture of the left and right-hand versions. They used Positron

Emission Tomography (PET) scans to watch how ritalin worked in the brain.

"We labelled individual isomers," Ms. Ding said in a telephone interview ahead of her presentation. "We were able to see the kinetics in the human brain. Based on our study, we really think further evaluation is necessary."

There was some evidence the "right-hand" version was 10 times more potent, she said.

Scientists have known for a long time about so-called chiral drugs, which have mirror-image versions of the molecules that make them up. A notorious example is thalidomide, the tranquilliser that caused severe birth defects in children in the 1960s.

Scientists later learned that the drug contained both left- and right-hand versions of

thalidomide, but one version was safe and the other was dangerous.

Ms. Ding stressed that there was no evidence that ritalin or its generic version, methylphenidate, might be harmful.

"We don't know that's the case for (ritalin)," she said. But another example was l-dopa, used for Parkinson's patients. If racemic dopa — using both left and right-hand versions, is used, "you see a lot of very, very serious side-effects. But if you only use l-dopa you don't see any side-effects."

If there is no evidence ritalin has hurt anyone, why bother purifying it? Ms. Ding said because any drug stresses the liver.

"The liver will try to get rid of the unwanted drug," she said. "It's an extra effort there.

The liver burden is much less if you only give one (version)."

Ms. Ding said many other drugs behaved in this way, including methadone, used to treat heroin addicts, and cocaine. With cocaine, only one isomer can get into the brain — the other is broken down by enzymes in the body almost immediately.

Ms. Ding said drug companies should carry out studies to see if there is any reason to break down methylphenidate or ritalin.

Stimulants have been used to treat ADHD for 60 years. Methylphenidate, sold as ritalin by Novartis and under generic formulations by several other companies, is the most commonly used one and is given to two million children in the United States alone.

Jomana Wael Karadsheh
Amman

Hesban expedition expands focus from biblical archaeology to reconstructing environmental and food cycles

This is the second of two articles on the archaeological and environmental investigation of Tell Hesban, one of Jordan's most important antiquities sites. Last week's article examined what has been learned about the history of this site since the biblical period. This article discusses the environmental, cultural and other dimensions of the research at Tell Hesban and its environs.

ONE OF the fascinating and most dynamic aspects of the work at Hesban has been its continuous expansion into new areas of interest. The dig's initial focus in the period 1968-1973 was on determining whether Tell Hesban was the site of the biblical town of Heshbon — home of King Sihon of the Amorites (Numbers 21:21-31) and one of the kings defeated by Moses during the Israelite "conquest."

That intriguing question remains largely unanswered, with scholars arguing for and against Hesban being the site of Heshbon. No archaeological evidence of a settlement before the Early Iron Age, c. 1200 B.C., has been found at Hesban, while the Old Testament accounts suggest that Moses' defeat of King Sihon and the Israelites' rebuilding of Heshbon should have occurred in the Late Bronze Age, around 1400 B.C. It is possible that biblical Heshbon might be located at other major archaeological tells in the area that do show Bronze Age town remains, such as Tell Umeiri and Tell Jalul. Project carismat Dr. James Sauer notes that one of the reasons the site seems not to have been occupied before the Iron Age is the lack of a spring or other fresh water source at Hesban itself. The nearest spring is some five kilometres away at 'Ain Hesban.

Reservoir by Solomon?

One of the fascinating debates still under way among scholars working at Hesban is whether the massive Iron Age reservoir — as Dr. Sauer recently suggested — was built in the 10th Century B.C. under the political and financial aegis of King Solomon, who "utilised Phoenician craftsmen to accomplish his extensive public works programmes." Dr. Sauer suggests Solomon would have sought to control the international trade along the King's Highway, and notes that the only mention of the pools of Heshbon in the Bible is in Song of Solomon 7:4 ("...your eyes are pools in Heshbon...").

In recent years, the main focus of the work at Hesban has shifted towards documenting how people throughout history interacted with their natural environment and managed their essential water and food resources.

Current director of the Hesban project Dr. Oystein La Bianca of Andrews University noted in the recently published collection of essays by members of the Hesban team, entitled Hesban After 25 Years, that the scholars working at the site have made a "journey from Heshbon to Hesban... (and) managed to transform their scope of research from a narrow focus on biblical events associated with the city of Heshbon to a broad focus on changes over time in how successive generations of people occupying the tell of Hesban went about providing for their food, water and security needs."

The work at Hesban over the decades has been widely recognised by other scholars in terms of its being "the first truly interdisciplinary undertaking in Jordan on a large scale" (Philip King); the



A view westwards from the summit of Tell Hesban, showing part of the modern village and, below it, some of the many caves being investigated by the project (photo by Rami G. Khouri)

renowned biblical archaeologist Professor G. E. Wright said that "with this publication (by James Sauer) of pottery sequences from Roman to the Crusader periods Hesban becomes the type-site for all archaeologists."

Information for visitors

Despite being one of Jordan's most thoroughly excavated and extensively published sites, Tell Hesban does not attract many visitors mainly because of its lack of facilities and explanations about its ancient remains. This is now changing, thanks to the new project launched last year by Andrews University (Michigan, U.S.) and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The work aims to clean up the site, restore some of its most important ancient structures, and provide visitors with pathways, signs and viewing platforms that

will make a walking visit through the tell both easy and informative.

A noteworthy dimension of this work is the deliberate effort to have local residents share in the work and the benefits; this has included providing workmen, making and writing the signs in Arabic and English, training a local guide, and, with the help of the mayor and teachers, promoting greater awareness among villagers of the site's rich history and its significance to overall Jordanian history, which would enhance the villagers' desire to protect the site. Another new aspect of the work that is already visible to the public is the string of road signs from Amman to Hesban.

Life below ground

The research at Tell Hesban now focuses in part on the Ottoman period, partic-

ularly on the many clusters of caves and subterranean barrel vaulted rooms located throughout the tell and in the surrounding areas. The undulating surface of the ground along the south side of the tell, near the large reservoir, is a sign of one such cluster that has not yet been excavated. Another complex can be made out beneath the church on the summit.

One excavated cave complex proved to have two stories — comprising a barrel-vaulted room added on the upper level of a large cave complex. Ottoman and Mamluke pottery was identified in the vaulted room, and Byzantine pottery in a room of the cave below. Arches and neatly hewn stones in the subterranean dwelling complex served to help support the ceiling

and also to divide the space into rooms. The complex had a cistern and two internal storage silos, passageways up to 10 metres long, and open spaces supported by columns and arches. The nicely cut stones along the top of the complex's main door stand about two metres below today's ground level. Some Iron Age II pottery in one of the storage silos suggests that the complex dates back at least to the Iron Age, if not earlier.

Dr. La Bianca and his colleagues plan to continue exploring the history of human use of the numerous cave complexes around Tell Hesban. Some of these, he believes, "were probably used almost without interruption throughout the entire history of human occupation of the site." Tents were also probably used in all ancient periods alongside the caves, he said in a recent interview, suggesting that houses built of stones and mud-bricks may not have been the primary habitation mode in all historical periods.

"During periods of prosperity and build-up of houses above the ground," he said, "a few cave complexes were extensively enhanced to serve the needs of wealthier families, while many others were used by the poor. During the periods when the tell showed little evidence of permanent human settlement, the caves no doubt continued to be used as seasonal residences." He also points to the fact that seasonal use of Hesban's caves is well known from the Late Ottoman and Early Modern period, when the Ajameh families who now live in the village's cement houses once inhabited now abandoned caves. From one of the new

viewing platforms on the summit of the tell, a visitor looking west can easily see a cluster of some 30 caves along the slopes of the adjacent wadi.

This research clarifies how the indigenous population adapted to changing socio-economic conditions during the cyclical periods of sedentarisation and nomadisation that characterise Hesban and most of central Jordan. In order to document the impact of these cycles on the population throughout the hinterland of Hesban, the project has regularly surveyed the region around Hesban and throughout the Madaba Plains. The original survey teams identified 155 sites around Hesban. Last summer a new survey team started to investigate 100 randomly selected 200 x 200 m. squares within a five-kilometre radius of Hesban. They identified over 20 new sites — despite the fact that this region had been surveyed previously. The most common pottery from the survey dated from the Iron II and Byzantine periods.

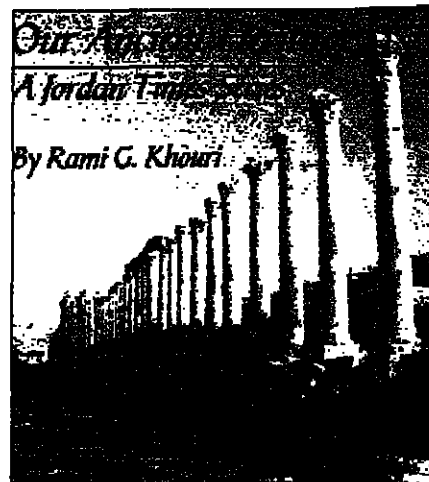
Reconstructing environments

The team working at Hesban now is probing deep into the tell to extract plant and animal remains that could be used to reconstruct environmental conditions in past eras. These may help to explain cycles in environmental conditions, and will also allow for a comparison with conditions at Hesban today. Complete with this line of investigation is a study of agricultural terraces in Wadi Hesban, in order to identify when they were

first built and to determine their history of use and abandonment. The excavation of caves is also a key focus, aiming to learn more about the environmental and cultural conditions of past inhabitants of the site, especially when people there may not have been practicing sedentary agriculture. Wood and other plant remains found in caves, Dr. La Bianca said, could provide important clues about the conditions of forests in the area during periods of low intensity habitation.

Another important dimension of the renewed work at Hesban, within the overall aegis of the Madaba Plains Project, is Project Rainkeep. This effort aims to encourage restoration of some of the several hundred ancient abandoned cisterns that have been identified by survey teams. With funding from the Canadian government, over 30 cisterns have been restored since 1994, and evaluation of this work is now under way before the next phase is launched.

Support for the current work at Hesban is provided by Andrews University students, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Archaeological Museum; the National Geographic Society (U.S.); and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. Logistical support is provided by the UNRWA Training Center, the American Center for Oriental Research, and the mayor and people of Hesban.



By Rami G. Khouri

EU hopefuls to start out on detailed road to entry

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Union Monday launches the historic process of taking in 11 new members, opening the way to a bloc embracing parts of the former Soviet Union and the Mediterranean island of Cyprus early next century.

At a meeting with their 11 counterparts Monday, EU foreign ministers will launch the membership process, moving Tuesday to open formal negotiations with the six front-runners — the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus.

The five stragglers — Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria — will be able to join the talks and could even overtake the favoured six later, but will first have to run fast enough to bring their economies and in the case of Slovakia its political system up to scratch.

The ceremonies over, the hard work of coming into line with tens of thousands of pages of EU rules will start for the 11 and the EU will be looking for results.

"No candidate country today fulfils the accession criteria,"

Francois Lamoureux, the French European Commission official who led the assessment of the candidates, told reporters. "But six of them will probably fulfil them in 2002-2003."

To help the candidates make the grade, the 15-nation bloc has established "accession partnerships" with each candidate, laying down short and long-term goals.

Under the partnerships, the EU will double the money available under the EU's phase programme to the candidates to three billion ECUs (\$3.3 billion) by 2000 to help taking on EU legislation and training civil servants.

The candidates will be closely monitored and the funds could be withdrawn if they start to lag.

The following is a sample of immediate, short-term objectives set by the EU in accession partnerships for the five Central European applicants which will launch membership negotiations. They are expected to be completed by end-1998.

Czech Republic: set economic priorities for medium-term, set policies to maintain internal

and external balance, improve corporate governance, accelerate restructuring, especially steel and banking, improve supervision in banking, securities, insurance, internal financial control, environment, and agriculture, amend anti-trust law, increase transparency of state aid, develop effective border management

Estonia: facilitate naturalisation process and take measures to better integrate non-citizens, especially stateless children. Enhance Estonian language training for non-speakers, set medium-term economic priorities, sustain growth, reduce inflation and increase national savings.

Accelerate land reform and increase private ownership strengthen financial control and supervision. Train civil servants. Improve border, environment, veterinary administration.

Adopt new competition law covering anti-trust and state aid, reinforce supervision and take measures to combat corruption and organised crime.

Hungary: advance structural reforms, particularly the health

care system, reinforce veterinary controls, especially at borders, more transparent state aid monitoring. Enforcement of intellectual property rights.

Implement appropriate refugee legislation consistent with 1951 Geneva convention.

Poland: accelerate privatisation and restructuring of state enterprises including telecommunications, accelerate banking privatisation and improve bankruptcy procedures.

Adopt, by June 30, and start implementing a viable steel sector restructuring programme. Pursue restructuring of coal sector.

Reinforce administrative capacity in state aid controls, customs, justice and home affairs, environment, taxation and regional policy.

Improve controls on Belarus and Ukraine borders set a coherent rural development policy. Upgrade, tighten and enforce food hygiene.

Slovenia: improve judiciary, land registration, sanitary controls especially at borders.

Top Sudanese politician says Islamist party no longer exists

(Continued from page 1)

in Uganda and other new African systems, Mr. Taha said: "Although it is an attempt to bestow acceptability and legitimacy on some regimes in the region, this constitutes a new development."

While Kampala has accused Khartoum of backing Ugandan rebels, the junta here has counter-accused that Uganda supports southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Sudan is on Washington's blacklist of countries sponsoring state terrorism, but Mr. Taha said President Bashir had sent a message to Mr. Clinton before his tour, asking him to contribute to peace processes

on the continent. Last year, Khartoum signed peace pacts with breakaway factions from the SPLA and reopened talks with the mainstream rebel movement led by Colonel John Garang, but differences still remain over Islamic law, secular rule, party politics and southern autonomy.

The constitutional controversy in Khartoum, which led to cynical remarks in papers and questions as to whether parliamentary members understood what they were doing, was the use of the term "rewali" in the key clause.

Mr. Taha said that "the freedom of 'rewali' (literally, 'succession') and of organisation is an attempt to find a system for politi-

cal devolution in "arrangements of our own, rather than founding in on the available alien experiments."

"Tewali," he argued, "is an original word which implies not only political but also social association."

He said that the now defunct NIF, led by parliamentary Speaker, Hassan Al Turabi, had backed the "salvation (junta) from the beginning... and got influenced by the accomplishments of the revolution."

"The developments have changed many of the old assumptions and the salvation revolution has succeeded in ending the pattern of confrontation and animosity between the military and civilian systems by creating a new relation-

ship between the people and the army," he claimed.

Asked whether the government was serious about permitting pluralism, Mr. Taha said that although it wanted "unity of a national rank of a community of believers with common objectives, this does not imply that the freedom of associations is not guaranteed to everyone who wants to keep out of the national congress."

Pressed on whether political parties would be allowed to operate once again, he stated that: "Everyone who manages to arrange his affairs within the controls of the law will have the right to form a party."

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Arab coffers sapped by debt servicing

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are paying nearly \$13 billion a year to service their foreign debt of more than \$160 billion, a top monetary official said.

"Arab debt has exceeded \$160 billion and servicing is now around \$13 billion a year," said Jassim Al Manari, chairman of the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the Arab League's main financial institution.

"All countries borrow, and there is no problem in having debts. But the problem is the extent of the debt that could be shouldered by a country," he told local journalists here after opening a seminar on Arab debts.

Mr. Manari, a Bahraini, gave no breakdown for Arab debts.

But an AMF report shows that Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia and Jordan are saddled with more than two-thirds of the total debts of the 22-member Arab League.

The figures also do not include military debts, estimated at more than \$70 billion for Iraq alone. They are mostly owed to the former Soviet Union, which was Baghdad's main arms supplier before the 1991 Gulf war.

The AMF, a regional IMF-style organisation, has repeatedly urged member states to carry out reforms to revive their economies, which are smothered by debts, slow growth, inflation, financial deficits and state domination.

Asia's unemployment seen soaring in '98

TOKYO (AFP) — Unemployment in nine key Asian nations is likely to nearly double this year due to the currency and economic crisis in the region, according to a Japanese think tank.

The number would reach 21.58 million in 1998, up 8.9 million from 1997, according to a report by the research arm of Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Co. quoted Sunday by the Tokyo Shimbun and other dailies.

The survey took in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

China was excluded as the country's economy is still largely state controlled, it said.

The report said the average unemployment rate for the nine countries was expected to rise 3.2 percentage points to 7.7 per cent.

Nearly six million people are likely to lose jobs in Indonesia this year, bringing the total to 10.31 million, the survey said.

South Korea and Thailand

Iraqi currency goes up

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's currency, the dinar, is on the rise against the dollar because of the improvement in ties with the United Nations over weapons inspections, the central bank governor said Sunday.

"The exchange rate of the dinar will improve a lot in the coming days," Issam Al Huweish told the weekly Al Mussawar Al Arabi.

"Whoever refuses to sell the dollar at 1,300 will be forced to sell it at a much lower rate," he stressed.

The dollar was trading in Baghdad on Sunday for around 1,380 dinars, compared to more than 1,600 at the peak of a crisis last month over U.N. weapons inspections.

Mr. Huweish said the rise of the dinar was due to "the improvement in relations between Iraq and the U.N." over disarmament, the key factor behind any lifting of the economic sanctions in force since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

World Bank agrees to lend Jordan \$50 million for health projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Bank has agreed to provide Jordan with a \$50 million loan for the development of the health sector. Health and Medical Care Minister Ahsraf Kurdi announced Sunday.

He said that during his visit to the U.S., in the company of His Majesty King Hussein, he met with World Bank officials specialising in health affairs and initiated an agreement on the \$50 million loan.

The loan will be split between the Ministry of Health, the Royal Medical Services, and the Jordan University Hospital as each of them had submitted projects to develop their respective services, said the minister.

Dr. Kurdi said the health ministry will use its part of

the loan to develop and modernise the Al Bashir Hospital at the cost of \$12 million in accordance with the hospital's three stage development plan which entails enlarging the hospital and purchasing modern equipment.

A sum of \$600,000 will go to the Princess Basma Hospital in Irbid, \$6 million will be used to finance programmes involving training of dentists, pharmacists and laboratory technicians, X-ray teams and upgrading the standards of doctors, Dr. Kurdi pointed out.

He said \$2 million will be used to finance central drug stores, \$4 million to build a physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre for which a 40 dunum land has been appropriated at Ghadamah area.

The Ministry of Health

also appropriated a plot of land at Zara, near the Dead Sea, to set up a centre for the treatment of skin diseases employing the Dead Sea salts and mineral water, Dr. Kurdi noted.

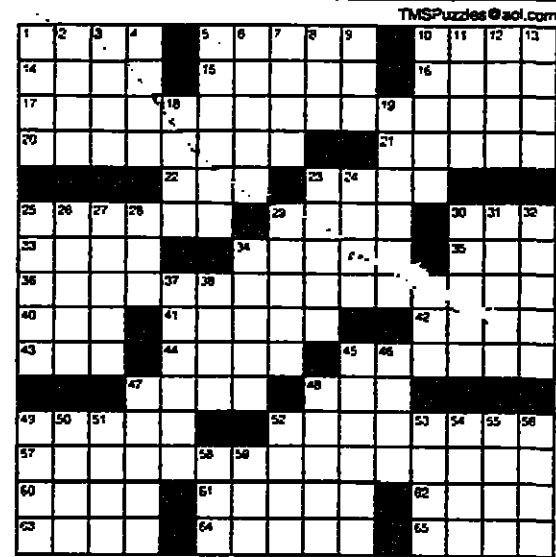
He said that \$6 million will be used to develop the laboratories of the Royal Medical Services, \$2.5 million will go to the Health Ministry itself, \$2.5 million will go to the Jordan University Hospital and \$4 million will go to the Royal Medical Services.

Dr. Kurdi said that the Ministry of Health has drawn up a strategy to be implemented from now until the year 2010 costing \$300 million and entailing the construction of hospitals and health centres and upgrading the existing hospitals and training of health cadres.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
ORGANIZED MARKET SECTORS PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 29/03/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	13.7	1.20	9	380	92780	338.00	334.50	3.50-	
2.340	1.660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	8	3847	6423	1.67	1.67	-	
1.300	1.090	MID. EAST INV. BK.	61.7	0.00	2	1250	1081	.97	.94	-.03-	
2.680	1.850	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.4	6.03	4	2800	4841	1.73	1.71	-.02-	
5.300	4.600	THE JORDANIAN BK.	30.3	1.90	19	5798	29396	5.00	5.10	.10+	
4.180	1.820	JOR. KUPAT BANK	9	0.00	3	99	184	1.90	1.86	-.04-	
8.920	1.820	JOR. GULF BANK	3	11.86	28	28000	16817	.62	.59	-.03-	
4.020	1.960	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.0	4.87	10	5342	10499	1.97	1.97	-	
1.400	.800	BEIT AL-KHAL (BEITRA)	5	17.65	1	250	213	.87	.85	-.02-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 222.95 %CHG: -0.60											
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	12.63	1	500	990	2.02	1.98	-.04-	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 121.73 %CHG: -0.19											
2.240	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.9	4.85	18	5011	10299	2.06	2.06	-	
5.500	2.450	RIVER HOTELS	54.7	0.00	2	380	1746	5.22	5.00	-.22-	
7.500	3.510	VEHIC. OWNERS FID.	13.7	3.60	1	100	333	3.51	3.33	-.18-	
1.550	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.9	0.00	19	9475	10026	1.07	1.05	-.02-	
1.150	.400	KID. EAST HOTELS	10.4	0.00	6	1246	1419	1.13	1.14	.01+	
4.400	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	10.4	1.92	3	250	1048	4.30	4.17	-.13-	
1.090	.900	SARAKA EDUCATION	16.7	0.00	2	2000	1890	.94	.95	.01+	
1.830	1.350	UNIPED CO. JORD.	6.8	7.18	12	4000	6178	1.55	1.54	-.01-	
.810	.600	UNION LARD DEV.	9	0.00	2	450	268	.65	.64	-.01-	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 118.08 %CHG: -0.86											
1.160	.930	ATTAQUEES	9	0.00	1	10000	10000	1.08	1.10	.02+	
4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.4	4.03	12	4054	10664	2.73	2.73	-	
6.140	3.050	JOR. PROSPERITY INDUS.	9.2	3.03	1	630	6709	10.67	10.65	-.02-	
11.150	4.200	JOR. PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.4	8.35	7	630	6709	10.67	10.65	-.02-	
2.350	1.100	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	9	0.00	13	5658	6912	1.25	1.28	.03+	
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.1	3.91	38	25023	127557	5.06	5.11	.05+	
7.200	4.000	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	4.1	5.00	1	200	400	2.10	2.00	-.10-	
1.530	1.020	JOR. PAPER IND.	15.2	6.50	6	804	991	1.21	1.23	.02+	
2.330	1.800	GENERAL MIXING	9	3.93	1	50	89	1.87	1.78	-.09-	
6.350	4.400	DAR ALAMANA DV. IND.	14.6	4.20	2	140	833	6.00	5.95	-.05-	
1.570	.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.4	0.00	6	2750	1320	.48	.49	.01+	
1.110	.680	ARAB PAPER CORV. IND.	21.7	0.00	1	750	533	.73	.71	-.02-	
1.100	.610	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	2	1000	605	.61	.60	-.01-	
1.250	.510	NATIONAL IND.	6.3	0.00	3	5700	3078	.75	.64	-.11-	
1.220	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.9	0.00	12	14650	14853	1.03	1.03	-	
.850	.660	JORDANIAN STEEL	38.4	5.88	85	211297	179831	.82	.85	.03+	
.820	.570	MID. EAST COAL	7.8	15.87	5	3300	2079	.64	.64	-	
1.100	.720	ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT.	54.9	0.00	1	4750	4750	1.00	1.00	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 111.35 %CHG: -0.07											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.34 %CHG: -0.43											
PARALLEL MARKET SECTORS PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 29/03/1998											
M 1.050	.910	EXPORT & FTR. BKK. 751	17.2	0.00	3	3000	2040	.93	.93	-	
M 1.000	1.000	ISLAMIC INSURANCE CO.	9	0.00	31	10000	10000	1.00	1.00	-	
M .800	.650	UNION INV. 501	9	0.00	11	18459	44293	.74	.74	-	
M .620	.360	ARAB FTR. INVEST.	9	0.00	10	12900	5688	.46	.44	-.02-	
M .780	.610	AL-DAMIRYAN 751	65.3	0.00	15	24138	10395	.68	.68	-	
M 2.220	1.050	CENTRO INV. GROUP	8	0.00	10	100000	200000	2.00	2.00	-	
M .290	.120	JOR. INTL. INVESTMENT	9	0.00	16	17650	2469	.13	.14	.01+	
M .470	.240	ARAB IND. INV. 200	42.6	0.00	20	28992	10700	.37	.37	-	
M .530	.280	RAIL. CEMENT	9	0.00	1	250	88	.38	.38	-	
M .750	.350	KAT. HOLD. BKK. HANCO	9	0.00	16	417106	154506	.38	.38	-	
M 1.230	.890	READY MIX CONCRETE	13.3	0.00	1	750	825	1.05	1.10	.05+	
M .690	.580	MIDWEST PAPER. 901	8	0.00	5	1139	603	.63	.63	-	
M 1.500	.860	UNION TOBACCO 751	9	0.00	3	1319	1858	1.41	1.43	.02+	
M .460	.240	INDS. BKK.	9	0.00	12	17750	4970	.29	.28	-.01-	
M .830	.510	INDS. CEMENT	13.4	0.00	2	750	380	.52	.51	-.01-	
M 1.250	.850	ADVANCED PAPER. IND.	25.0	0.00	12	25000	16228	.64	.62	-.02-	
M 1.000	.660	IND. ALUMINUM. 751	34.6	0.00	12	20250	8708	.68	.68	-	
M 1.310	1.000	WETTRAND	9	0.00	3	1500	1575	1.05	1.05	-	
M 1.000	.750	EXTRA PRINT CO. 751	13.7	8.42	8	10150	6598	.90	.90	-	
GRAND TOTAL											
182 869149 472690											

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS
- Passageway
 - Spring harbinger
 - Pip
 - Theater award
 - Swiftly
 - Burden
 - Revised up
 - Regular boyfriends
 - Scintillas
 - Fra about aimlessly
 - Singer Damone
 - Book before Hosae
 - Submerged
 - Director Howard
 - Celtic land
 - Lover of Daphnis
 - "The Name of the Rose" author
 - Receives the go-ahead
 - Diligent insect
 - Rain ice
 - Venture
 - Utter
 - Amorphous mass
 - Low tracts
 - Rose or Sampras
 - Round legume
 - Eagle's abode
 - Namibia's neighbor
 - Accelerated
 - Infection
 - Conehead?
 - Sailor's bed
 - Fifth of five
 - Haughty gaze
 - Yellow and Black



- DOWN
- Big pigs
 - Touch against
 - Salesman's wares
 - Musical Home
 - The type
 - Close
 - Cries of contempt
 - Cool down
 - Born in Bordeaux
 - Corporate images
 - Work group
 - Our moon
 - Takes advantage of
 - Verge
 - Metallic element
 - Parking attendant
 - Privy to
 - French impressionist
 - Forum
 - gritty
 - Green card org.
 - Wool producers
 - Majestic
 - Earthy pigment
 - Musical units
 - de menthe
 - Napping
 - Concerning
 - Harrow rival
 - Neighbor of Mont.
 - Hunting dog
 - Clothesline
 - load
 - Hollow tubes
 - de Leon
 - Invites
 - News chiefs, for short
 - M. Descartes
 - Leftover for Rover
 - Insect snares
 - Malaria
 - "Peter Pan" pet
 - Invites
 - News chiefs, for short
 - Harass for payment

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 30, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're good at learning new games, so practice one that will make your life easier. You can't afford to buy the latest equipment, so you have to do it the hard way. Well, you're gaining valuable experience. When you finally get the money together, you'll know just exactly what to buy.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're likely to tell somebody today something you had been keeping to yourself, so you might as well plan the best way to say it. Be nice, but firm. The other person will be tolerant and understanding, and the overall result will be improved communications. Keep that in mind and you'll do just fine.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Pick up the donuts on the way to work again this morning and your boss will be in a more pleasant mood. Otherwise, you could walk straight into a brick wall. You want to do something that he or she isn't real gung-ho about. Don't force a confrontation yet.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There are tough decisions to make, which need to be thought out carefully. Consult your friends and do a little more reading. The more prepared you are, the better. Don't let anybody push you into making a

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Saket proposes setting up independent, top-notch privatisation institution

AMMAN — "PRIVATISATION IS not an ideology but rather an economic policy or a tool to implement a policy," former minister Basam Saket said in a recent lecture. "Basically, there should not be any distinction between the private sector and the public sector because the issue is not ideological as much as it is a matter of economic management and efficiency," Dr. Saket, currently president of the Jordan Trade Association, explained.

He indicated that the preference for privatisation and the leaning towards the private sector was the result of the virus of low efficiency and high cost that afflicts the public sector. "It is not necessary that the activation of the private sector is one of the justifications for privatisation neither is it that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector," Dr. Saket said. He emphasised that the improvement of performance is the required policy regardless of the type of sector.

"If there is scope to improve the management in the public sector, especially in education, health and strategic production, within a specific period, then it is better to keep the ownership unchanged," he said. However, Dr. Saket saw a paramount importance that the state should not relinquish its traditional role of being the social reference for security for needy classes of the society.

Dr. Saket criticised some member of the Lower House of Parliament for opposing the government's privatisation programme which is being implemented. He attributed their opposition to ideological reasons or

for mere rejection of government policy without enough knowledge about the privatisation programme, the reasons behind it and the bases on which it stands.

The president of the Jordan Trade Association stressed that privatisation in Jordan was needed for structural reform and for raising efficiency and rectifying high costs due to low productivity and unreal trade and manufacturing costs respectively. Furthermore, he saw the privatisation as a response to the international drive to liberalise production and trade, obtain cash liquidity for the treasury, through facilitating the process of buying shares, and to lower deficits resulting from financial support to troubled companies in addition to securing technology through strategic partners.

Dr. Saket specified the following three basics for privatisation:

1. Setting up a central institution that would be totally independent and having complete and capable technical and administrative cadres. "Establishing an executive privatisation unit is a step but is not enough," he said.

2. Providing a reference for independent control to ensure protection for the official, the investor and the consumer.

3. Reorganising the local administrative, economic, financial and government policies through a credible and experienced management, an easier and more incentive-based tax policy and through eliminating bureaucracy as well as formulating a transparent legislation to offer security for local and foreign investors (Al Ra'i).

Japan stands to be Jordan's first aid donor

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Japan has given Jordan a total of 216.388 million yens in loans since 1974, making it Jordan's first aid donor, a senior planning ministry official has said.

The aid has helped to improve the country's water, irrigation, environment, energy, and communication schemes. Salem Ghawi, assistant secretary general at the Ministry of Planning, told a recent meeting organised by Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

He said the percentage of Japanese loans and aid given to Jordan over the past years formed 23 per cent overall international aid.

"Therefore, the government of Japan is considered the number one country offering aid to Jordan," Mr. Ghawi told reporters attending a four-day tour of JICA-funded projects across Jordan.

He said Jordan was expected to sign a new loan agreement with Japan to finance tourist projects worth \$70 million.

He said both governments were negotiating a Japanese grant of \$12 million to support plans to expand the King Hussein Bridge linking Jordan and the West Bank.

Tokyo helped finance the expansion of the bridge last year, giving Jordan a \$7.7 million grant.

Mr. Ghawi said Japan might consider a loan of between \$50 million to \$60 million this year to fund regional development project that might include setting up an airport, expanding water projects and constructing roads.

"The government is also studying the possibility of obtaining a \$20 to \$30 million loan to help develop Jordan's industrial sector," he said.

He added that Japan was providing flexible loans to be repaid over 30 years with a 10 year grace and annual interest rates ranging between one and 3.5 per cent.

Tokyo, he said, offered two types of financial assistance to Jordan: easy long-term loans, and technical help grants and project-type programmes supervised by JICA.

Yosio Yabe, resident representative of the Jordan JICA office established in 1991, said the grants extended to Jordan were in the form of financial fund assistance without a repayment obligation on the basis of government to government agreement to help meet basic human needs and developing the country's resources.

"We hope this cooperation between Japan and Jordan will develop and that more projects will be implemented in the future to help develop Jordan's economic situation," Mr. Yabe said during the tour.

He said that JICA wanted to set up a new scheme to help support

industrial development policies in Jordan and provide funding and expertise.

Mr. Yabe said JICA had a variety of technical schemes in place aimed at promoting international technical cooperation to help developing countries advance their social and economic situation.

JICA, he indicated, has offered training opportunities to selected public sector participants to improve their skills.

The programme included group training, individual training including counterpart training, country focused training courses, and Third Country Training Programme (TCTP).

"This programme is organised and conducted by the concerned Jordanian governmental organisations, while JICA extends support as well as technical cooperation," Mr. Yabe said.

JICA also dispatches Japanese experts to help develop human resources and advance technological know-how.

The sending of experts varies from individual

experts and teams that can help conduct feasibility studies for master plans and feasibility studies to "senior volunteers" — aged between 40 and 69 who transfer their skills.

Japan also dispatched members of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), aged between 20 and 39, who enjoy specific skills and live and work with local people thus contributing to the socio-economic development of local communities.

This type of assistance is combined with other types of cooperation, such as provision of equipment and technical training programmes to a specific development project.

"JICA donates technical equipment, necessary for effective technology transfer done by the assigned Japanese technical experts, volunteers and ex-participants of JICA's training programme," Mr. Yabe said.

JICA also conducts development studies in order to propose plans and provide information to enable JICA's part-

ner governments to decide on the implementation of development projects.

The technical and economic viability of proposed projects are examined and assessed through the implementation of Master Plan Studies (MP), Feasibility Studies (FS) and estimated project costs.

The four-day tour included visits to the Electronic Services and Training Centre at the Royal Scientific Society where a joint Japanese, Jordanian and Palestinian medical equipment maintenance training programme was launched.

"This training course lasts for three months and is held three times a year," Mr. Yabe said.

The tour included other projects such as a scheme for the improvement and maintenance of water supply facilities at the Water Authority of Jordan.

Other projects included donating equipment and technical assistance to the Hashemite University by SOVC and JOCV volunteers to help in

developing the university's environmental centre through preparing a curriculum for the masters programme, proposing research projects in environmental problems, and establishing research facilities for the programme.

The university had also received financial aid and highly developed equipment enabling it to establish a Remote Sensing Lab, and a Geographic Information System to help in decision-making regarding the use of land-based resources.

"The use of such techniques is now possible at the Hashemite University with the hardware, software and satellite data that have been donated by JICA," said Salem Sabri, the university's vice president.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.8278	0.6947	1.4984	130.40	1.4145	1802.02	2.0894	6.1267
DE Mark	0.5471	-	0.3281	0.8188	71.33	0.7737	985.63	1.1288
GB Sterling	1.6816	3.0743	-	2.5196	219.31	2.3788	3030.10	3.4629
Ch Franc	0.9674	121.90	0.3984	-	86.39	0.9434	1201.83	137.38
JP Yen	0.0077	1.4012	0.4658	1.1488	-	1.0843	13.81	157.57
CA Dollar	0.7070	1.2917	0.4200	1.0589	1.08	-	1273.81	1.4854
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0140	0.3297	0.0831	1383.70	0.7947	-	11.43
NL Guilder	0.0056	98.73	0.2885	72.78	33.27	0.8867	374.81	2.9738
FR Franc	0.1632	0.2983	0.0970	24.4629	21.26	0.2308	33.61	33.6100

Middle Eastern Currencies

	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	0.7090	3.7803	0.3770	3.6395	0.3053	3.6728	1827.30	3.4126
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	8.2898	0.5317	5.1333	0.4308	5.1800	2154.16
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1891	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.25
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8807	9.9483	-	9.65	0.8097	9.74	4051.41
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0838	1.01	419.65
Kuwait Dinar	3.2760	2.3227	12.2880	1.2350	11.82	-	12.03	5003.44
Emirate Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0212	1.0205	0.9910	0.0831	-	415.88
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4842	2.4865	0.2488	2.3830	0.1999	2.4046	-
Egyptian	0.2830	0.2078	1.0980	0.1105	1.0665	0.0895	1.0762	447.58

Energy

	USD	DEM
Brent	14.98	18.24
WTI	16.80	18.88
Bonny	14.98	18.24
Dubai	13.18	12.89
UL Gas	160.00	168.00

Mid-East Currencies

	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4875	0.1888	0.3981	34.7838
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49781	0.18183	0.4026	35.5202
KW Dinar	3.2760	5.98802	1.94818	4.91158	427.35
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.84868	1.57754	3.97772	348.021
CY Pound	1.8726	3.4227	1.113	2.8059	244.167

Metal Prices

	USD	DEM
Gold (oz's)	302.5	303
Silver (oz's)	6.38	6.41
Platinum (oz's)	409.5	411.5
AL (3 Months)	1457	1460
CU (3 Months)	1765	1760
Zinc (3 Months)	1113	1118
Lead (3 Months)	578	582
Ni (3 Months)	5510	5540

Libor Fixing

Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
USD	5.7188	5.7344	5.7989	5.9141
GBP	7.5280	7.5885	7.6042	7.6094
JPY	0.8858	0.8021	0.7813	0.7804
DEM	3.6000	3.6624	3.7375	3.8749
FRF	3.5313	1.4167	1.6000	1.6771
CHF	1.3842	3.5898	3.6863	3.8438
ITL	5.5820	5.3480	4.9910	-

Main Equity Indices

	Index	Value	Chng	%Chng	High	Low	52Wk
New York	DOW JONES	8796.08	-50.81	-0.57	8895.72	8771.68	8846.89
New York	S&P 500	1095.44	-5.36	-0.49	1107.18	1091.14	1100.8
London	FT-SE 100	5939.3	33.7	0.57	5977	5898	5905.6
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16738.28	-241.36	-1.42	17078.4	16736.8	16980.6
Paris	CAC 40	3810.23	25.45	0.7	3851.1	3765.29	3783.78
Frankfurt	DAX	5083.16	43.4	0.86	5096.44	5036.21	5039.78

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Sports

SuperSonics beat Knicks 104-78

SEATTLE (AP) — Vin Baker scored 17 points and Gary Payton added 16, including four 3-pointers, to help the Seattle SuperSonics beat a tired New York Knicks team 104-78 on Saturday night.

The 26-point defeat was New York's worst loss of the season. The Knicks were led by Allan Houston's 15 points and Larry Johnson's 14.

For Seattle, Greg Anthony also had 16 points, including 12 in the final period, and Hersey Hawkins and Jerome Kersey each scored 12. After a short hook shot by Johnson tied the score at 10-10 with 5:48 gone in the game, it was all Sonics.

They went on a 17-4 run to end the first quarter as Hawkins sank two 3-pointers and a 16-footer to take a 27-14 lead after one period. The Knicks' John Starks left the game with 3:58 remaining in the third quarter after slamming hard into Seattle's 7-foot Jim McIlvaine. Starks, who had 10 points, grabbed his right thigh and did not return.

Jazz 106, Lakers 91: In Salt Lake City, Karl Malone scored 31 points on a milestone night and John Stockton added 13 points and nine assists as the Utah Jazz defeated the Los Angeles Lakers 106-91 Saturday despite 31 points

by Shaquille O'Neal.

Malone hit two free throws with 11:16 left in the first period to go ahead of Malone and finished the game with 27,440 points. He now trails only Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain and Michael Jordan on the all-time scoring list.

Jeff Hornacek added 11 points and Greg Foster and Bryon Russell had 10 each as the Jazz won their fifth straight and improved to 14-1 for the month of March.

Nick Van Exel, coming off the bench but playing 35 minutes, added 15 points for Los Angeles as the Lakers' five-game winning streak came to an end. It was the first time in three games this season that the Jazz beat the Lakers.

The Lakers did not come closer than 11 points in the fourth quarter, and were held without a field goal for a stretch of 5:30 in the last seven minutes of the half. When Eldon Campbell scored with 2:35 left, the Jazz were ahead 101-85 and the game was out of reach.

Van Exel hit a running one-hander off the glass with one-tenth of a second left in the half to bring the Lakers within 59-51. O'Neal scored 22 in the half on 8-of-13 shooting.

Juventus back in charge

MILAN (AFP) — Juventus were back on course for a second consecutive Italian league title on Saturday night, after matching wins for Inter and Lazio with a 4-1 drubbing of AC Milan.

Inter had temporarily taken top slot on Saturday afternoon after Ronaldo converted a penalty in the fifth minute of injury-time for a heart-stopping 2-1 win over 10-man Vicenza.

And Lazio had moved up to second place with a 2-0 away victory over Udinese.

But Juventus returned to the top of the Serie A by demolishing 10-man AC Milan in a goal feast for Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi.

Del Piero opened the scoring with a 12th minute penalty and although Croatian midfielder Zvonimir Boban equalised for Milan with another penalty in the 33rd minute, the turning point was not long in coming.

In the space of less than five minutes, Del Piero curled home a superb free-kick and Boban was sent off for a foul on former teammate and Dutch international Edgar Davids.

Inzaghi then struck twice in the second half as Milan's already tottering defence simply collapsed.

Juventus finished the day on 57 points, with seven games of the season left to play. Inter are second on 56, with Lazio — who host Juventus at the Olympic stadium next Sunday night — third on 55.

Ronaldo had promised before his game to round off the week in style, having already scored in Sunday night's 3-0 derby victory over AC Milan and the winner in Brazil's friendly in Germany on Wednesday night.

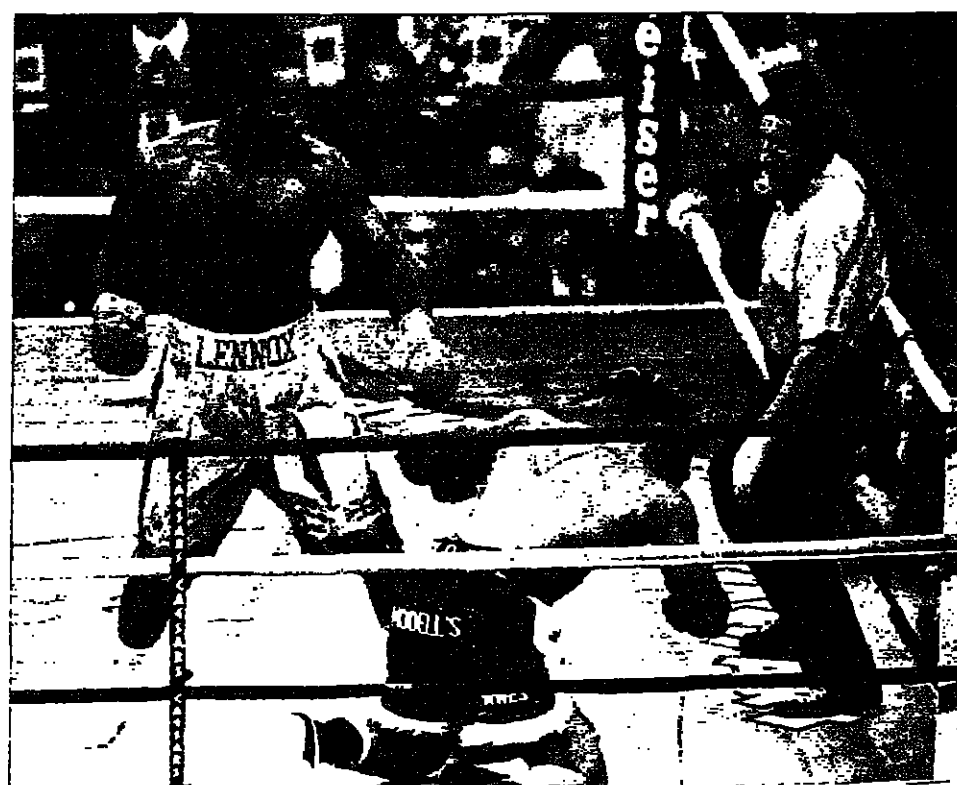
He struggled to get into his stride in the first half, but a fine header midway through the second hit the post with the Vicenza goalkeeper hopelessly beaten.

Argentina hardman Diego Simeone then followed up his two goals against AC Milan by heading Inter into a 67th minute lead, and 10 minutes later Vicenza had defender Giacomo Dicara sent off for tripping Ronaldo at full tilt.

Inter only had to hang on, but their defender Francesco Colonnese equalised when he provided a fatal touch to Lamberto Zauli's shot.

However, Inter's charmed season continued when Ronaldo converted his penalty with the last kick of the game.

Inter president Massimo Moratti said: "As usual, we suffered an enormous amount, but we didn't play badly. Everyone gave their best."



Lennox Lewis (L) stands over downed Shannon Briggs (C) in the fifth round of their heavyweight title bout in Atlantic City. Referee Frank Capuccino (R) ruled a TKO after this knockdown punch (Reuters photo)

Lewis keeps WBC crown

ATLANTIC CITY (AFP) — Britain's Lennox Lewis kept his World Boxing Council heavyweight title here Saturday by stopping American Shannon Briggs in the fifth round.

Referee Frank Capuccino stopped the fight one minute and 45 seconds into the round after Briggs swang wildly and fell to the canvas.

Lewis sent Briggs down twice in the fourth and again with a combination in the fifth round. Briggs rose but was pounded by Lewis in a corner.

Lewis rose to 33-1 while Briggs fell to 30-2. Both fighters were breathing hard after a furious early pace. Lewis was staggered twice in the first round but recovered and outpunched Briggs from then on.

Ferguson relieved after United win 2-0

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United kept their noses in front in the race for the English Premiership title with a 2-0 win over Wimbledon while Arsenal maintained their push for the top with a 1-0 win over Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday.

United's win preserves their six-point lead over second-placed Arsenal, who have three games in hand over the reigning champions.

Injury-hit United dominated from the start at Old Trafford but they needed two late goals to finally see off a typically resilient Wimbledon side.

Wimbledon looked as if they were going to hold out for a point until Ronny Johnsen scored his first Premiership goal seven minutes from time.

Paul Scholes added a second with his eighth goal of the season in stoppage time to seal the champions' first win this month at the sixth attempt.

And manager Alex Ferguson could barely disguise his relief, saying: "I can't disguise how delighted we are at the results. It looked as if we were not going to get it, but we kept persevering and we deserved to win the game."

Ferguson felt it was a vital result because Arsenal had

also won. Dennis Bergkamp, meanwhile, showed how much he will be missed by Double-chasing Arsenal when he begins a three-match suspension with the only goal of the game against Wednesday at Highbury.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger conceded the absence of Bergkamp is a blow but maintains his team can cope without him.

The main drama of the day, however, came at Barnsley's Oakwell Stadium where third-placed Liverpool's 3-2 win was marred by a series of pitch invasions and three sendings-off.

Referee Gary Willard had to be led off the pitch for his own protection as the match was suspended halfway through the second half.

One fan ran on in an attempt to confront the official and was only removed after a number of Barnsley players, led by Jan Aage Fjortoft, wrestled him to the ground.

Liverpool captain Paul Ince took the same action on another fan shortly before the end after Darren Sheridan became the third Barnsley player to receive a red card in the stormy encounter.

Barnsley boss Danny Wilson is expecting an FA inquiry into the crowd trou-

ble, but he stressed: "If you look over the years this club has been involved in nothing like this before."

Elsewhere, scandal-hit Newcastle slid further towards the relegation zone after crashing to a 2-1 defeat at Southampton.

Robert Lee opened the scoring for United in the 46th minute but Southampton hit back through an own goal and a Matt Le Tissier penalty.

Kenny Dalglish's side were condemned to their 13th league defeat of the season and the loss left them just three places and four points above the drop zone.

Tottenham's hopes of survival grew with a 3-1 win over basement club Crystal Palace, who are now seven points from safety with only seven games left.

Tottenham boss Christian Gross said he was delighted by his team's display — but immediately set his sights on next week's game against fellow struggling giants Everton, who crashed to a 4-1 home defeat to Aston Villa.

In the day's other matches, two goals from Alan Thompson gave Bolton a 2-0 win over Leicester to boost their hopes of survival while a Darren Huckerby goal was enough to give Coventry victory over Derby.

English hooligans stage fightback as World Cup looms

LONDON (AFP) — The murder of a football fan and a string of violent incidents in recent months has sparked fears that English hooligans could be staging a fightback after years of relative peace in the country's football stadiums.

The escalation in football-related violence reached new heights on Saturday and fuelled worries that trouble involving England fans could explode at this summer's World Cup finals.

Hooliganism was synonymous with English football in the 1970s and 1980s when terrace violence was a near-weekly feature at matches.

The 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster in Brussels when 39 Juventus fans died during fighting with Liverpool fans before the European Cup Final finally forced the authorities to take tougher action against the thugs.

But it was not until the Hillsborough disaster of 1989 when 96 Liverpool fans died in a crush on the terraces — though not caused by violence — that major overhaul of English football was ordered by the government.

The resulting Taylor Report forced a root-and-branch transformation of the game as stadiums were improved, policing was improved and laws were toughened. Since then, hooliganism has largely dis-

appeared from English football grounds, though it continues to be a problem when the national side travel abroad.

British police have taken much of the credit for turning the snarl on the face of English football into more of a smile, but events this year back the cynics' point of view that the problem not been eradicated, only controlled.

On Saturday alone, there were three incidents to set the alarm bells ringing.

The murder of the Fulham fans during running battles with Gillingham fans was the most disturbing event of the day.

But there was also major trouble during Barnsley's Premiership clash with Liverpool when angry fans twice invaded the pitch after the referee sent off three home players.

A fan also ran onto the pitch during the Premiership match between Everton and Aston Villa at Goodison Park but was intercepted by police before he reached the referee.

Last week, twenty-nine men in Sunderland were arrested in early morning raids by police involved in preventing organised hooliganism at the World Cup.

The day before, nineteen known football hooligans were prevented from entering Switzerland for attend England's World Cup warm-up.

Earlier this month, a Sheffield United fan who knocked out a linesman during a first division match at Portsmouth was jailed for three months and banned from attending matches in England and Wales for a year.

In February, 20 Cardiff fans were arrested before their side's FA Cup replay with Reading, which ended with scores of riot police drafted in to prevent disorder.

David Mellor, chairman of the Government's Football Task Force, whose tasks include monitoring hooliganism, said he was alarmed by recent developments.

"Football supporters have got to take a long hard look at themselves," said Mellor. "The game has cleaned up its act immeasurably from what it was in the mid-80's and it is now a family sport for the first time ever, and this is welcomed."

"But in our enthusiasm for our teams we have got to remember that it is only a game and that there are expressions of hate and outbursts of violence, pitch invasions, aggression against people that have to be banished from our game."

"People must show a sense of proportion however important the game may be considered to be. We do not want to go back into the Dark Ages. We just have to keep our enthusiasm within legitimate bounds."

Monaco keep title hopes alive; Nantes win

PARIS (AFP) — French champions Monaco kept their hopes of retaining the title alive on Saturday beating relegation-threatened Guingamp 1-0 thanks to a last-minute goal by Martin Djedou.

Monaco, who play Juventus in a European Cup semi-final, first leg on Wednesday, moved to within four points of leaders Metz, who take on second-placed Lens on Sunday.

Djedou, who was outstanding in Monaco's European Cup quarter-final win over Manchester United, scored with a superb shot from John Collins' header to end a run of three successive league defeats, but in front of just 3,000 fans.

Paris Saint Germain, too, kept their slim hopes of a place in next season's Champions League alive on Saturday by beating Lyon 3-0 — their first win in eight league matches.

The 1996 European Cup Winners' Cup champions, who were watched by 37,000 spectators at Parc des Princes the day after they declared an interest in moving to the showpiece Stade de France after the World Cup Finals,

moved to within seven points of the league leaders.

A double from Italian star Marco Simone, his second double of the season to take his total to 12, and one from Brazilian playmaker Rai, his 10th of the season, sealed a comfortable win over Lyon, who are fighting for a UEFA Cup place.

Simone, who moved to PSG from AC Milan last summer, scored the best goal of the night after being released by Rai as he deceived his marker, raced down the right wing and produced a stunning cross-shot.

The main beneficiaries in the tight battle for UEFA Cup places were Bordeaux who eased past Toulouse 3-1, who had captain Dominique Arribage sent off for two bookable offences.

In other matches, Gerald Batiste scored in the last-minute to hand Strasbourg a vital 2-1 win in their struggle against relegation over

Auxerre, whose UEFA Cup hopes took a battering.

Nantes won 2-1 at Chateauroux, who look certain to return to the second

division, Bastia beat Le

Havre 2-0 and Rennes boosted their chances of beating relegation beating Montpellier 2-0.

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 - Finalising purchase orders for renovating the clinics and ordering of equipment and furniture;
 - Maintaining inventory lists.

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All applications will be kept strictly confidential.

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Palestinian protesters clash with Israeli troops in Gaza

RAFAH (AFP) — Israeli soldiers scuffled with protesters and fired tear gas to break up a demonstration by Palestinians against confiscations of their lands here on Sunday, witnesses said.

Some 150 Palestinians marched to a piece of land which had been seized by the army near the Egypt-Gaza border in the town of Rafah and planted several olive tree seedlings on the site, witnesses said.

Israeli soldiers approached the protesters and told them to leave, then scuffled with several of them and fired tear gas and concussion grenades to disperse the crowd, the witnesses said.

The soldiers also tore up a

number of the olive trees. There were no reports of injuries.

The clash broke up when Israeli and Palestinian security officials conferred and the soldiers and demonstrators agreed to leave the areas and allow the remaining olive trees to remain in place.

The army confiscated the land several months ago, saying it was needed to expand their post along the border.

The demonstration was called for Land Day, a Palestinian occasion which marks the shooting by Israeli soldiers of Arab Israeli demonstrators, killing six of them, as they protested the seizure of their land on March 30, 1976.

Deputy proposes separate PNA police for Arab east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinians in Arab east Jerusalem are not satisfied with the Israeli police and want their own organised force, a Palestinian lawmaker said Sunday.

But Israel, which routinely condemns any step that could be seen as bolstering the Palestinians' claim to Arab east Jerusalem as the capital of their hoped-for state, rejected the idea.

Hatem Abdul Qader, who was elected to represent Jerusalem in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said a plainclothes Palestinian force was needed to fight theft and drug trafficking in east Jerusalem, the Arab sector of the city.

"We need a civilian police force. The Israeli police have failed to maintain our security in Jerusalem," he said.

Israel's internal security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, said Israel would not allow creation of such a force.

Mr. Abdul Qader said the nucleus of one already exists.

"We already have young men that we send to resolve disputes. All that is new is that we want to better organise their work," he told The Associated Press.

During the six-year intifada, calling Israeli police to report a crime was considered an act of treason among Palestinians.

After the signing of the 1993 Oslo peace accords, a Palestinian police force was set up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but not in Jerusalem, since the city's future status has not yet been settled. Israel claims all of the city as its own capital.

Mr. Abdul Qader and other Palestinian leaders said Arab citizens were still reluctant to call Israeli police, and claimed police give priority to crimes in Jewish neighbourhoods.

Mr. Kahalani said Palestinians in Arab east Jerusalem "get the treatment they need" and added that Israel was opening more police stations in Arab neighbourhoods.

Rights group slams Israeli violations against Palestinians

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A human rights group slammed violations by Israel against Palestinians in 1997, saying Sunday there had been a slight improvement by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) towards human rights.

"The main violation against Palestinian human rights is the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands," said Khader Shkeirat, head of the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment. During 1997, 20 Palestinians died at the hands of Israelis, two of them while under interrogation in prison and another 16 shot by Israeli soldiers along with two others killed by Jewish settlers in the

West Bank, Mr. Shkeirat said. Mr. Shkeirat, issuing his group's annual human rights report for 1997, said Israeli authorities demolished 197 Palestinian homes and confiscated some 2,500 hectares of land in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem for settlement expansion.

"Most of the homes destroyed were either in east Jerusalem or near settlements or settlers' roads in the West Bank in a policy of ethnic cleansing to remove Palestinian populations from these areas," Mr. Shkeirat said.

In the PNA, there has been some improvement in officials' attitude towards human rights, but violations have continued, said Shauqi Eissa.



HEAD SHAVE: An Indonesian father shaves his child's head as his son sits in the floodwaters surrounding their house in a village near Bandung on Sunday. Thousands of homes have been affected by the worse flooding in the West Java since 1994 (Reuters photo)

Turkish-Cypriot cabinet coalition collapses

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish-Cypriot government coalition collapsed on Sunday in a row over a sacked cabinet minister, the Turkish Anatolia news agency reported.

"The coalition is definitely finished," Serdar Denkash, "vice-premier" of the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and leader of the Democratic Party (DP), was quoted by Anatolia as saying after a top-level meeting of his party.

Mr. Denkash announced that his party would formally withdraw from the coalition with the right-wing National Unity Party (UDP) of Turkish-Cypriot "prime minister" Dervis Eroglu on Monday.

The DP would propose the formation of a transitional government ahead of elections, he added.

Mr. Eroglu had sacked a DP cabinet minister on charges of corruption earlier this month, triggering the current political

crisis.

Serdar Denkash is the son of the Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denkash.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkish troops occupied its northern third in response to a Greek-Cypriot coup aimed at reunification with Greece.

The Turkish Cypriots created the TRNC in 1983, but it is recognised only by Turkey which keeps some 35,000 troops there.

Turkish PM wins backing of left-wing party for coalition

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz has for the time being stopped a key left-wing party from withdrawing its support from his minority coalition, Turkish media said on Sunday.

The Cumhuriyet daily said Republican People's Party leader Deniz Baykal had agreed to continue backing the Yilmaz government in return for an early election.

"Baykal made his long-term support conditional on the setting of a date for early elections," it said.

Other papers carried similar stories, predicting polls in autumn this year or spring, 1999. Elections are not due until the year 2000.

Mr. Baykal's party backs the conservative-led government on key votes in NATO member Turkey's parliament, giving it a majority. Earlier this month he said the coalition had exceeded its natural lifespan and called for it to end.

Mr. Yilmaz last week satisfied Turkey's powerful armed

forces that he was committed to fighting the perceived threat of Islamist activism, easing military pressure on his coalition.

Mr. Baykal is now expected to back the parliamentary passage of a package of laws cracking down on radical Islam.

Overwhelmingly Muslim Turkey has a strictly secular legal code which the army sees it as its duty to protect.

Iran studying U.S. offer to post official in Tehran

TEHRAN (R) — Iran is studying a U.S. proposal to base an American government official in Tehran, an Iranian newspaper reported on Sunday.

"A proposal has been sent to the Iranian government in writing regarding the setting up of an American office at the Swiss embassy, which is being examined now," Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Ayatollah Mohajerani was quoted as saying by the daily Khabar newspaper.

The minister did not say what role the office would have, but a report in the New York Times

on Thursday said the United States had offered to appoint an official from the U.S. Information Agency to be stationed at the Swiss mission.

The embassy of Switzerland handles all U.S. diplomatic correspondence with Iran. The United States and Iran cut diplomatic ties after Iranian militants stormed the U.S. embassy in 1979 taking American diplomats hostage for 444 days.

Mr. Mohajerani, speaking to reporters in Paris on Friday, praised the administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton for refusing a request from the U.S.

Congress to create an opposition-led "radio free Tehran," the newspaper said.

"Decades of experience have shown that these kinds of things have no effect on the Iranian government," the minister said.

He said Mr. Clinton's recent message to the Iranian people, congratulating them on their new year which followed Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's call for opening "cracks in the wall of mistrust" were positive signs in the Iran-U.S. relationship, the newspaper said.

U.N. urged to probe Saudi discrimination of foreign workers

DUBAI (AFP) — The organisation Human Rights Watch called Monday for the United Nations to investigate what it called discrimination against foreign workers in Saudi Arabia.

"Severe shortcomings in Saudi Arabia's labour and legal systems encourage the exploitation of foreign workers, leaving them vulnerable to serious abuses, and arrest and conviction on false charges," the New York-based group said.

"Workers who do demand their rights have found themselves falsely accused of crimes punishable by flogging, amputation or beheading, in a legal system that... is biased in favour of Saudi nationals" and discriminatory, it charged.

It noted that "of the more than 630 individuals known to

have been executed in Saudi Arabia since 1990, more than half have been foreigners."

The system under which foreign workers have to be "sponsored" by a Saudi national also came in for criticism, with Human Rights Watch saying it granted too many rights to employers.

"In many cases, employers confiscate workers' passports, leaving them subject to possible arrest and deportation as undocumented aliens," it said.

"These restrictions on movement sometimes give rise to conditions of forced labour... Women employed as domestic helpers are particularly vulnerable to forced labour, as well as physical and sexual abuse."

Human Rights Watch also accused Saudi authorities of "silencing [labour] sending countries' complaints with the

implicit threat of mass expulsions of their nationals."

It called for the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to urge Saudi Arabia to ratify the U.N. convention on the rights of migrant workers and to extend its labour laws to all categories of workers without discrimination.

Saudi authorities said in October that more than 500,000 illegal foreign workers had left the oil-rich kingdom under a three-month amnesty which allowed them to come forward for deportation without paying a penalty.

According to unofficial estimates, foreign workers make up a third of the kingdom's 18 million population. Most of the migrants come from Asian countries, notably India, as well as Egypt and Yemen.



British foreign secretary fixes date to marry assistant

LONDON (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook set a date to marry his former assistant, eight months after their affair became the Labour government's first front-page sex scandal. Cook is to marry Gaynor Regan, 41, on Apr. 19 at a private ceremony at the 52-year-old Foreign Secretary's official residence at Chevening House, according to his spokesman. "The wedding will be a happy ending to the difficult time Robin and Gaynor have been through," said the spokesman. "Chevening has given them a haven from the pressures of public life and they both want to get married where they have had their most peaceful hours together."

Diana tribute fashion show, ball and auction to be held

LONDON (AFP) — A fashion show, celebration ball and auction will be held in the summer as a tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales. The charity event, named "Diana, Princess of Wales — A Tribute in Dress," will feature an exhibition containing dresses worn by the princess and a fashion show featuring spring and summer collections from leading designers. The event will take place on Friday, May 29, in Oswey in west England. Proceeds from the evening will benefit the Diana Memorial Fund, set up to promote causes she espoused while alive.

Fergie gets a role in 'Friends'

LONDON (AFP) — Fergie, Duchess of York, has filmed her first sitcom, teaming up with the cast of the hit U.S. show "Friends" for a cameo appearance. Film crews captured the duchess in a small speaking part in London alongside the show's heart-throb actors. The U.S. show is in Britain this week to film the final episode of the current series in which actor David Schwimmer's character Ross is due to marry Emily, played by British star Helen Baxendale.

Media mogul reinforces tipping reputation

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian media mogul Kerry Packer has reinforced his reputation as one of the world's best tippers with \$50,000 "gifts" to four women who served him drinks and food at a golf retreat, a report said. The Sunday Telegraph said all four women had since resigned from their jobs at the Hope Island golf resort in Queensland state. Packer, proprietor of Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd. and Australia's richest man, rewarded the hostesses after he had a lucky run at a local casino, the report said.

Unknown Pooh sketches expected to fetch \$50,000

LONDON (R) — Three recently discovered drawings for the children's classic book "Winnie the Pooh" are expected to fetch \$50,000 at a London auction in May, Sotheby's said. The anonymous owner said he decided to sell them after reading about another set of Pooh drawings recently being sold at auction. He said his mother was given the drawings in the 1960s by a friend. The artist, Ernest Shepard, who illustrated many of A.A. Milne's stories, often gave away his sketches as presents. The largest drawing shows Pooh and Christopher Robin writing letters at a desk, another shows Pooh sitting with a pot of honey, and in the third he is licking his paw.



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